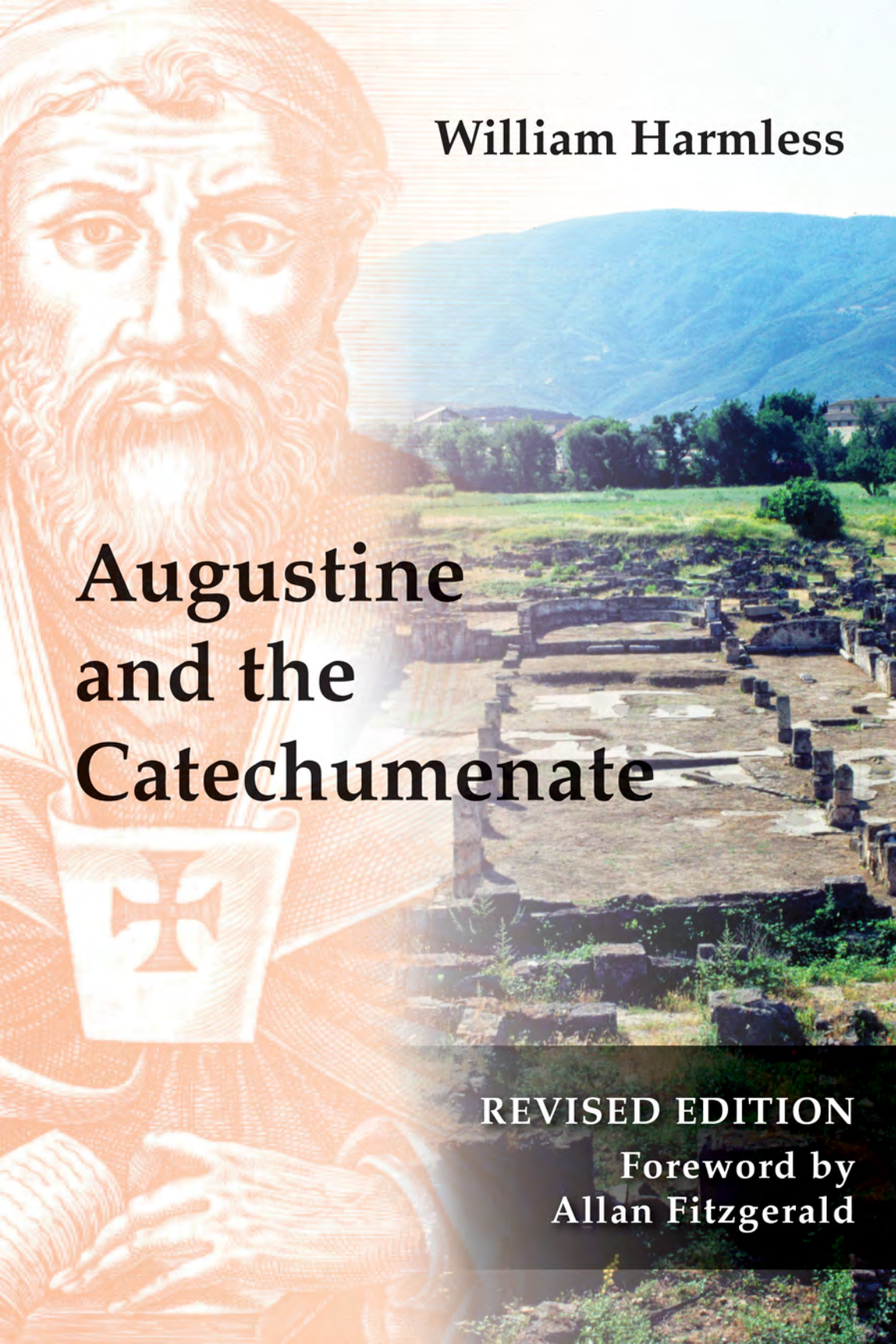

William Harmless

Augustine and the Catechumenate

REVISED EDITION

Foreword by Allan Fitzgerald

VISIT…

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William Harmless, SJ

Augustine and the Catechumenate

Revised Edition

Foreword by
Allan Fitzgerald, OSA

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In memory of my mother, Mary L. Harmless,
and my father, Roy Harmless.

Sit ergo in pace cum uiro . . .
cui seruiuit fructum tibi afferens cum tolerantia,
ut eum quoque lucraretur tibi.
Et inspira domine meus, deus meus, inspira
seruis tuis, fratribus meis, filiis tuis, dominis meis,
quibus et corde et uoce et litteris seruio. . . .
Meminerint cum affectu pio parentum meorum
in hac luce transitoria.

May she rest in peace, together with her husband. . . .
In serving him she patiently brought forth fruit for you,
so as to win him for you in the end.
Inspire, my Lord, my God, inspire
your servants who are my brothers and sisters,
your sons and daughters who are my masters,
whom I now serve with heart and voice and pen. . . .
Let them remember with loving devotion
those who were my parents in this transitory light.

Confessiones 9.13.37

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Abbreviations

WORKS OF AUGUSTINE

The complete listing of abbreviations and the titles for the works of Augustine can be found in Cornelius Mayer, ed., *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 3 (Basle: Schwabe, 2010), XI–XXV, and in Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), xxv–xlii. Those used in this book are as follows:

Acad.	*Contra Academicos / De Academicis* [*Against the Academics*]
agon.	*De agone christiano* [*On the Christian Struggle*]
an. et or.	*De anima et eius origine* [*On the Soul and Its Origin*]
an. quant.	*De animae quantitate* [*On the Greatness of the Soul*]
bapt.	*De baptismo* [*On Baptism*]
beata u.	*De beata uita* [*On the Happy Life*]
b. coniug.	*De bono coniugali* [*On the Good of Marriage*]
c. ep. Pel.	*Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* [*Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*]
c. Faust.	*Contra Faustum Manicheum* [*Against Faustus the Manichee*]
c. Iul.	*Contra Iulianum* [*Against Julian*]
c. Iul. imp.	*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* [*Unfinished Work Against Julian*]
c. litt. Pet.	*Contra litteras Petiliani* [*Against the Letters of Petilian*]
cat. rud.	*De catechizandis rudibus* [*On Catechizing Beginners*]
ciu. Dei	*De ciuitate Dei* [*The City of God*]
conf.	*Confessiones* [*Confessions*]

cons. eu.	*De consensu euangelistarum* [*On the Agreement among the Evangelists*]
correpт.	*De correptione et gratia* [*On Admonition and Grace*]
Cres.	*Contra Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati* [*Against Cresconius, a Donatist Grammarian*]
cura mort.	*De cura pro mortuis gerenda* [*On the Care of the Dead*]
diuin. daem.	*De diuinatione daemonum* [*On the Divination of Demons*]
doctr. chr.	*De doctrina christiana* [*On Christian Teaching*]
Dulc. qu.	*De octo Dulcitii quaestionibus* [*Eight Questions of Dulcitius*]
en. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos* [*Expositions of the Psalms*]
ench.	*Enchiridion / De fide spe et caritate* [*Enchiridion / On Faith, Hope, and Love*]
ep.	*Epistulae* [*Letters*]
ep. Io. tr.	*In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* [*Tractates on the First Letter of John*]
f. et op.	*De fide et operibus* [*On Faith and Works*]
f. et symb.	*De fide et symbolo* [*On Faith and the Creed*]
Gn. litt.	*De Genesi ad litteram* [*On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*]
gr. et pecc. or.	*De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* [*On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*]
Io. eu. tr.	*In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* [*Tractates on the Gospel of John*]
lib. arb.	*De libero arbitrio* [*On Free Choice*]
mag.	*De magistro* [*On the Teacher*]
mor.	*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* [*On the Catholic Way of Life and the Manichean Way of Life*]
nupt. et conc.	*De nuptiis et concupiscentia* [*On Marriage and Concupiscence*]

ord.	*De ordine* [*On Order*]
pecc. mer.	*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo paruulorum* [*On Merits and the Forgiveness of Sins and on Infant Baptism*]
retr.	*Retractationes* [*Revisions*]
s. dom. m.	*De sermone Domini in monte* [*On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*]
Trin.	*De Trinitate* [*On the Trinity*]
uera rel.	*De uera religione* [*On True Religion*]
uirg.	*De sancta uirginitate* [*On Holy Virginity*]
util. cred.	*De utilitate credendi* [*On the Usefulness of Believing*]
util. ieiun.	*De utilitate ieiunii* [*On the Usefulness of Fasting*]

COLLECTIONS OF AUGUSTINE'S SERMONS

Finding one's way around the corpus of Augustine's sermons is not easy. A core collection of 396 of Augustine's "sermons to the people" (*Sermones ad populum*) was assembled by the Benedictines of St. Maur in their classic seventeenth-century edition of Augustine's complete works and was reprinted in Patrologia Latina, vols. 38 and 39. Researchers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discovered more than 170 additional sermons (some complete, some fragments); these were collected and published in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, ed. Germain Morin, vol. 1 (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930–1931). In older studies one sees sermons from this miscellany cited under the name either of the scholar who discovered them (e.g., Denis, Lambot, Morin) or of the library where they were found (e.g., Guelferbytanus). Pierre-Patrick Verbraken, in his *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin* (Steenburgis: in abbatia S. Petri, 1976), renumbered these nineteenth- and twentieth-century discoveries and integrated them into the Maurists' numbering system by adding a letter to the number: thus Sermo Guelferbytanus 7 is now listed as s. 229A. Verbraken's numbering system has now become the standard, and as further discoveries have been made (e.g., by François

Dolbeau in 1990, Isabella Schiller in 2008), these too have been numbered according to Verbraken's system. For a complete listing of Augustine's sermons according to both numbering systems, see Edmund Hill, ed. and trans., *Sermons*, Works of Saint Augustine III/1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1991), 138–63; Éric Rebillard, "Sermons," *Augustine Through the Ages*, 774–89; and Cornelius Mayer, *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 3 (2010), XVI–XXV. To aid researchers references to the sermons are listed with both the older and the newer numbering systems. The abbreviations of these sermons are as follows:

s.	*Sermones ad populum* [*Sermons to the People*], ed. Benedictines of St. Maur
s. Casin.	*Sermones in bibliotheca Casinensi editi*
s. Caillau	*Sermones*, ed. A. B. Caillau et B. Saint-Yves
s. Denis	*Sermones*, ed. Michel Denis
s. Dolbeau	*Sermones*, ed. François Dolbeau
s. Erfurt	*Sermones Erfordienses Bibliothecae Amplonianae*, eds. Isabella Schiller, Dorothea Weber, and Clemens Weidmann
s. Étaix	*Sermones*, ed. Raymond Étaix
s. Frangip.	*Sermones*, ed. Ottavio F. Frangipane
s. Guelf.	*Sermones ex collectione Guelferbytana*, ed. Germain Morin
s. Lambot	*Sermones*, ed. Cyrille Lambot
s. Mai	*Sermones*, ed. Angelo Mai
s. Morin	*Sermones*, ed. Germain Morin
s. Wilm.	*Sermones*, ed. André Wilmart

SERIES, TRANSLATIONS, AND REFERENCE WORKS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers (New York: Newman Press / Paulist Press)
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers (1887; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995)

AOW	*Augustine in His Own Words*, ed. and trans. William Harmless (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010)
ATA	*Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999)
Aug-Lex	*Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Mayer, 4 vols. (Basle: Schwabe, 1986–)
BA	Bibliothèque Augustinienne (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer / Institut d'Études Augustiniennes)
CCL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnholt: Brepols)
CEASA	Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky)
DACL	*Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Fernand Cabrol, Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907–1953).
ECF	The Early Church Fathers, ed. Carol Harrison (New York: Routledge, 1997–)
FOTC	The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press)
Geerlings	Wilhelm Geerlings, ed. and trans., *Possidius: Vita Augustini*, Augustinus Opera–Werke (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005)
MA	*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, ed. Germain Morin, 2 vols. (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1930–1931)
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (1887; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995)
O'Donnell	James J. O'Donnell, ed., *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies, ed. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993–)

OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press)
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris)
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris)
RB	*Revue Bénédictine* (Namur, Belgium : Abbaye de Maredsous, 1890–)
RCIA	*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988)
SC	Sources chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf)
SCA	Studies in Christian Antiquity
SEC	Studies in Early Christianity, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1993).
Vingt-six	*Augustin d'Hippone: Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique, Retrouvé à Mayence*, ed. François Dolbeau, CEASA 147 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1996)
WEC	*Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, trans. Lawrence J. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009)
WS	Woodbrooke Studies
WSA	*The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John Rotelle and Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990–)

Foreword

Not long before the untimely death this year of Bill Harmless, he had submitted the final page proofs of this book—a revision of the 1995 edition. Keeping the best of the first edition, he also filled this revision with fascinating changes and useful new material. It thus displays the avid dedication to research and the lively communication that characterized the scholar-teacher we came to appreciate and love. In the following remarks about the scholarship and publication of this restless and creative Jesuit priest, I offer a snapshot of his contribution to the many kinds of readers whose imaginations and interests he wanted to inspire, hopeful that they would, in their turn, reach for something more.

A good place to begin is with Bill's recent article, the result of an oral presentation at *Reconsiderations IV*: "A Love Supreme: Augustine's 'Jazz' of Theology."[1] Notice, he said, how our medieval-inspired framework for theology "can block us from hearing the Scripture-centered musicality of Augustine's performances and block us from recognizing Augustine as he saw himself, namely, as a performer . . . of God's Word." Bill thus joined his love for jazz and his appreciation of Augustine's improvisational style in an invitation to hear—not just read—Augustine's "dizzying off-the-cuff and on-the-spot improvisations." In the process he highlighted the easily overlooked facet of the oral quality of Augustine's thinking: always rhetorically engaging, constantly adapting to the listeners,

I want to thank Prof. Michael Cameron (University of Portland), Prof. Jonathan Yates (Villanova University), and Prof. John O'Keefe (University of Creighton) for their help in writing these words.

[1] *Augustinian Studies* 43, no. 1/2 (2012): 149–77. *Reconsiderations IV* was held at Villanova University, September 13–15, 2012, on the theme of Augustine: Ancient Inspiration, Modern Muse.

ever trying to delight with his rhetoric. Linking Augustine's improvisation to the sounds of modern jazz allowed Bill, yet again, to teach Augustine in a mesmerizing way and to help us learn how to be captivated by the rhythm in Augustine's thinking and speaking.

Bill's active historical imagination made the past come alive on a page. But so much of the energy in his own thinking and writing seemed to flow from his conversations with others: with his Jesuit brothers, with his colleagues on university campuses, with fellow scholars in early Christian studies, and, perhaps in a special way, with the students he taught. His book *Augustine in His Own Words*[2] is an anthology of well-chosen texts from Augustine's writings, accompanied by thoughtful introductions, perceptive footnotes, and useful bibliographical entries. The thoughtful choice of texts, often translated anew by Bill, provides a good way to begin to know Augustine or to meet him again in new and surprising ways. It is also an example—as is his book *Mystics*[3]—of the importance of pedagogy for him, with pertinent suggestions for further reading and astute comments on existing scholarship. His attention to the kind of detail that benefits others can also be seen in the masterful set of online of theological bibliographies.[4]

In the years since the publication of the first edition of this book, Bill's scholarship did, of course, extend to other Augustinian topics[5] and beyond.[6] The widening of his perspective allowed him

[2] *Augustine in His Own Words*, ed. William Harmless (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

[3] *Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[4] See http://moses.creighton.edu/harmless/bibliographies_for_theology.

[5] "Christ the Pediatrician: Infant Baptism and Christological Imagery in the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997): 7–34; "The Voice and the Word: Augustine's Catechumenate in Light of the Dolbeau Sermons," *Augustinian Studies* 35, no. 1 (2004): 17–42.

[6] For example, "The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 3 (2001): 498–529; *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); "Mystic as Experienced Exegete: Bernard of Clairvaux," in *Tolle Lege: Essays on Augustine and Medieval Philosophy in Honor of Roland J. Teske, S.J.*, ed. Richard Taylor (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), 277–301.

to return to *Augustine and the Catechumenate* with fresh eyes and new enthusiasm for the ways historical research is useful, not only for students in the classroom, but also and especially for those engaged in ministry. As he says in his preface, he wanted to bring this revised edition "up to date from top to bottom, to better reflect the state of current scholarship on Augustine, on liturgical studies, and on the catechumenate, both ancient and modern."[7]

This study of the ancient catechumenate in the first edition was already helpful to many of those who were working for the initiation of new Christians because it provided a way to see the practical pastoral reality of their work from the point of view of another culture in another time. This revision has benefitted not only from many reviewers' comments about that first edition but also from more than twenty years of Bill's teaching, preaching, discussing, and celebrating the sacraments of initiation. His perception of what happened in North Africa, therefore, was sharpened by reflection and meditation on the experience of Christian communities today—one more striking example of how present practice enriches historical research and investigation of the past in turn enlivens and improves practice.

Allan Fitzgerald, OSA
The Augustinian Institute

[7] See the preface to the revised edition.

Preface to the Revised Edition

Around 426 CE, in the dusk of a long literary career, Augustine went back and reread everything he had published. His rereading inspired him to compose a small treatise titled *Retractationes*. The title, often but inexactly translated as "Retractions," is better rendered in English as "Reconsiderations" or "Revisions." In it Augustine gives brief, brisk reviews of each of his works, listing them in order of publication and citing what occasioned their writing. Along the way he quibbles with this or that passage, sometimes correcting what now seemed a misstatement, at other times defending or amplifying what he had written decades earlier. "I wanted to write this," he says, "in order to put it into the hands of the people from whom I cannot ask back what I have already published and needs correction."[1]

Augustine had to wait forty years before he had the chance to revise his earliest publications. I feel fortunate not to have had to wait quite so long. It was twenty years ago when Liturgical Press published the first edition of this book, and I am grateful to have the privilege of going back and placing my own reconsiderations and revisions not into an appendix but into the text itself. In this new edition there are changes on nearly every page. Certain concerns that seemed urgent in the early 1990s seem less so now, and so various bits here and there have been excised. I have also spent the last twenty years teaching Augustine and much else. That has alerted me to the ways I sometimes presumed things I should not have. It has also taught me to say certain things better, more crisply, with less jargon. So one will find the occasional new paragraph or new anecdote or newly sharpened sentence. In my many and various tinkerings I have tried not to alter too much the

[1] *retr.* prol. 3 (CCL 57:6); trans. Boniface Ramsey, *Revisions*, WSA I/2 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2010), 22.

flavor of the original or turn this into a completely new book. But I wanted this new edition to be up to date from top to bottom, to better reflect the state of current scholarship on Augustine, on liturgical studies, and on the catechumenate, both ancient and modern.

In the last twenty years Augustinian scholarship has witnessed a wide array of new discoveries, new resources, and new perspectives. Among the new discoveries, the most significant has been François Dolbeau's unearthing of twenty-six new sermons. These were collected and published in 1996 and were accompanied by Dolbeau's astute and learned commentaries.[2] Among those sermons is one in which Augustine speaks at length about the death of a catechumen; other sermons offer a variety of new angles of vision on this or that element of Augustine's catechumenate.[3] I treat these new discoveries at various points, especially the end of chapter 4.

As for new resources, critical editions of Augustine's *Letters* and *Expositions of the Psalms* are now nearing completion. Of more immediate importance to most students of Augustine, there is now a vast new library of translations. When I worked on the first edition of this book I drew on (and often tinkered with) an uneven hodgepodge of translations. Also, at that time the majority of Augustine's sermons were not yet available in English, and so many of the translations in the previous edition were my own first efforts to render Augustine's intricate and musical Latin into English. Just as I was wrapping up my writing, Edmund Hill's comprehensive translation of Augustine's sermons was beginning to appear in a new series, *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (WSA). This fine series, some forty volumes and counting, makes the bulk of Augustine's works available in lucid translations based on the best Latin editions. In preparing this revision I have changed out many of the older translations and inserted those from

[2] François Dolbeau, ed., *Augustin d'Hippone: Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique, Retrouvé à Mayence*, CEASA 147 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1996).

[3] See William Harmless, "The Voice and the Word: Augustine's Catechumenate in Light of the Dolbeau Sermons," *Augustinian Studies* 35 (2004): 17–42.

the WSA series or from my own 2010 anthology, *Augustine in His Own Words*.[4] Also in the last twenty years there have appeared two landmark reference works devoted to Augustine: the multivolume *Augustinus-Lexikon*, whose publication is ongoing, and the one-volume *Augustine Through the Ages*, edited by Allan Fitzgerald, which appeared in 1999.[5] These not only offer fine summaries of texts and themes but have standardized many essentials, including the Latin (and English) titles and the abbreviations of Augustine's works. The notes to this new edition now reflect those standards. As for new perspectives on Augustine—well, there are simply too many to begin to list here. I have threaded the most urgent of these here and there into the text itself and included many others in the notes to provide readers resources to which they may wish to turn next.

The last twenty years have also seen advances in liturgical studies of the patristic era. Among new discoveries, the most important has been a negative one. Through most of the twentieth century, liturgical scholars accepted the accuracy of attributing a church order titled *The Apostolic Tradition* to the early third-century Roman presbyter Hippolytus and presumed that the document reflected, to some degree, liturgical practices and customs of early third-century Rome. That attribution and that dating have been undermined by the philological, liturgical, and historical analyses of Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell Johnson, and Edward Phillips.[6] They raised questions especially about its chapters on the catechumenate and baptism. In my previous edition I had followed that earlier scholarly consensus and had opened my background chapter on the ancient catechumenate with a discussion of *The Apostolic Tradition*. Because of this recent scholarship it seemed simplest to excise those pages and refocus how I situate the legacy of the

[4] William Harmless, ed., *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

[5] Cornelius Mayer, ed. *Augustinus-Lexikon*, 4 vols. (Basle: Schwabe, 1986–); Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

[6] Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, eds., *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

third-century catechumenate. That section now deals solely with North African sources that directly affected Augustine, namely, the writings of Tertullian (now treated in more detail) and of Cyprian (newly added).

As for new resources in liturgical studies, none has proved more helpful than Everett Ferguson's encyclopedic *Baptism in the Early Church*, published in 2009, which examines every important figure and every important baptismal document from the patristic era, collating the best current scholarship with an eye to liturgy, theology, and archaeology.[7] When I began my research I had at hand no such reliable compendium and struggled to situate Augustine's catechumenate and the rites of his church within the wider landscape. The survey histories then at my disposal were rather dated, limited in scope, and insufficiently sensitive to contexts (social, literary, theological). While I had been able to mine certain well-crafted studies on this or that text or author, it was hard to see the forest for the trees. In this revision I have been repeatedly aided by Ferguson's encyclopedic survey as well as by a wide array of other recent more specialized liturgical studies.

From the beginning, this book has had a dual readership. One major group has been scholars interested in Augustine or in the liturgy of the patristic era. Their reviews, comments, and criticisms have proved invaluable. Augustine once remarked: "What I desire for all my works . . . is not merely a kind reader but also a frank critic."[8] I have deeply valued both my frank critics and my kind readers. Among that scholarly readership, many appreciated the difficulty of gathering, ordering, and breathing life into what was a vast mass of data. I had sought to communicate the rich-hued textures and the robust humanity of Augustine's everyday world and the poignant vibrancy of his preaching, and I was pleased that those qualities came across and received such a good critical reception. Several reviewers expressed puzzlement at the way I situated this investigation in terms of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II and

[7] Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

[8] *trin.* 3, *prol.* 2 (CCL 50:128); author's trans.

contemporary catechesis. They found the idea of drawing inspiration from Augustine and Christian antiquity for contemporary renewal somewhat curious; several noted the risk of anachronism but judged (happily) that I avoided it. One appreciative reviewer worried that scholarly readers interested in Augustine might not get beyond the introduction and encouraged such readers to skip the opening pages and plunge directly into the chapters on Augustine and his world. For readers with such interests, let me second that suggestion and encourage them to follow their instincts and read what interests them.

But such uneasiness raises a helpful question: Why do we write our histories? Why expend long years and great effort first acquiring the knowledge and skills required to write history and then plunge into the rigors of research, gathering the documentation in all its messiness, struggling to make sense of the multiple voices and the all-too-human biases they speak from? We who are professional historians mostly do this as a matter of course and, often enough, do not articulate to our colleagues, perhaps even to ourselves, why we set off on these long, often costly ventures. We historians are professional rememberers. We explore communities' collective memories, alert to gaps in the historical record and the varied agendas of the texts (as well as the historians who interpret them) that make the hard task of telling the truth harder. At the same time we work from a core conviction that such remembering does, in the long run, offer the present something of value. It is urgent, I believe, to articulate why we do what we do. In this new edition I have tried to do so somewhat more cogently. What had been chapter 1 in the original edition is now pared down and recast as an Introduction, mostly because it is stylistically different from the chapters that follow; it sets out the rationale for the investigation rather than serving as part of that investigation. That recast introduction now speaks more explicitly of this project in terms of a *ressourcement*, a "return to the sources." I grew up just as the reforms of Vatican II (liturgical and much else) were filtering out and stirring up all manner of new things. As I have gotten older I better appreciate how bold and how brilliant were that generation of scholars who laid the groundwork for Vatican II: Yves Congar,

Marie-Dominque Chenu, Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, Josef Jungmann—to name but a few. Their efforts have been criticized, sometimes sharply, as have been the efforts of those who sought to make their scholarly work a practical pastoral reality in churches across the globe. I share that generation's profound conviction that remembering well helps keep the Christian church Christian.

Without the study of history, we risk communal amnesia. Remembering, in this instance, the catechumenate and the rites of initiation means remembering about matters very close to the heart of being Christian. The call to conversion, to *metanoia*, appears among the opening words of the Christian gospel. And baptism, which celebrates such conversion, is the doorway into the Christian assembly. Water and chrism are the double door that allow one to stand and break bread among those gathered in memory, in *anamnesis*, of Jesus' dying and rising. If we do not remember the history of these things well, then our doorway stands neglected, even unhinged. This book is thus an exercise, albeit a limited one, in ecclesial memory care. It explores a single episode, though an important one, within a much broader history of Christian catechesis—a history that, I should add, has yet to be written.

One other large segment of readers has been church leaders—clergy, religious educators, pastoral ministers—who work in churches across the globe and who, among their many duties, work to initiate new Christians. They routinely seek resources to better equip themselves for the mysterious and often baffling task of guiding people through conversion and into communion. Many of these readers have kindly reviewed what I have written or have written to me directly and spoken of the way this plunge into remembering Augustine and his generation has proved helpful in their day-to-day work. Twenty years on, the catechumenate is now more of a routine fixture both in Catholic parishes and in mainline Protestant churches. My hope is that this new edition may serve as a better, richer resource for those who do the work of initiation on a routine basis.

Alongside all this there has been, in the last twenty years, the rise of a new traditionalism. In commending the study of Augustine and others of his era I have no traditionalist agenda. Respect for tradition is not traditionalism. Drinking deeply of the Christian tradition

tends to unmask the fixities of a traditionalism more concerned to repeat past formulae than to understand them, more interested in control than in the search for truth, more anxious to keep the world at arm's length than to embrace it in all its vibrancy and its brokenness. While I believe it urgent to study the past with meticulous care, I have no interest in antiquarianism, whether liturgical or catechetical or ecclesial. What I treasure is wisdom. I seek it out wherever and whenever I can. Studying the history of Christianity offers the possibility of remembering people who possessed some measure of it, some insight into the depths of the human heart, its mysteries, its compassion, and its brutalities. I believe that Augustine and others of his generation had a measure of wisdom about the task of teaching Christianity. They also had a measure of blindness and hard-heartedness. Their efforts, both the good and the bad, are worth savoring. One of Augustine's deepest insights was that we human beings possess a dark, mysterious propensity for selfishness, for self-absorption, for evil. He called it original sin. But he celebrated its undoing by God's grace, by God's uncanny knack to break through our sin-encrustedness and crack us open and restore in us a primordial insight and compassion and will to do the good. He was convinced that conversion is possible and that teaching has a role to play in conversion. We remember not just to remember, as though memory were an end in itself. We remember in the hope of recovering shards of wisdom, and by their compass better orienting our own bearings in the mystery of this journey.

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I would also like to thank Catholic University of America Press for letting me draw on the translations from my book *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2010). The Augustinian Heritage Institute has kindly granted permission to use the translations from its series, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*.

The Bible that Augustine cited was the so-called *Vetus Latina*. The Old Testament of the early Latin Bible(s) had been translated not from the Hebrew, as one finds in modern Bibles, but from the Greek Septuagint. So Augustine's biblical citations do not always match modern versions. The translations here, whether mine or others, reflect the Bible Augustine know.

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I must thank a number of people for their guidance and encouragement on this project: first, Martin Elsner, SJ, and the people of St. Joseph's Parish in Houston who gave such support and brought such enthusiasm to the task of implementing the RCIA. I am particularly grateful to those who served on my dissertation committee: Thomas H. Groome, who directed my doctoral work and whose reflections on religious education have done so much to shape my own educational praxis; Rev. Robert P. Imbelli, whose insights on Christology alerted me to the melodic core of Augustine's catechesis; Michael S. Schiro, who guided my study of curriculum and educational philosophy; and especially Brian E. Daley, SJ, who introduced me to patristic studies and whose insight, imagination, and sympathy did so much to bring Augustine and his era alive. I must also thank my Jesuit brothers and my parents, family, and friends who were so supportive through the years of research and writing, especially Paul Deutsch, SJ; Joseph Fortier, SJ; David Borbridge, SJ; Randall Rainey; Mel Halbert; Maureen O'Brien; Almeda Colby; and Ann Harmless. Finally, I must acknowledge my profound debt to Raymond Fitzgerald, SJ, who each week read through my scribblings, checked my translations, and acted as an astute discussion partner through it all.

To Return to the Sources

One hardly expects radicalism from Rome. But in 1972 the Vatican promulgated the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (*Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*, usually referred to as "RCIA"). In so doing it reversed more than a thousand years of initiatory practice and attitude.[1] As Ralph Keifer once put it, "under the aegis of an ecumenical council, with the approval of the Roman see, and over the signature of the Roman pontiff, the primary rites of initiation . . . have been turned upside down and inside out, heralding a cry to begin a reform and renewal of the most radical sort."[2] The

[1] *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, rev. ed., International Commission on English in the Liturgy [ICEL] (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988). The original Latin *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* was published in 1972; an interim English translation was approved in 1974. After it had been in use for more than a decade, the Catholic bishops of the United States approved a revision and mandated it for implementation in 1988. For commentaries see *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate*, Murphy Center for Liturgical Reflection (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976); Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism* (New York: Pueblo, 1978); Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 375–409; James F. Puglisi, SA, "Rite(s) of Baptism in the Catholic Church: A Theological-Pastoral Commentary," 29–54 in *Baptism Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*, ed. Thomas F. Best (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008).

[2] Ralph Keifer, "Christian Initiation: The State of the Question," 138–51 in *Made Not Born*, at 138. The proximate impetus for the revision of the rites of Christian initiation came from the legislation of Vatican II, notably *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 64–66; *Lumen Gentium* 14; *Ad gentes* 13–14; *Christus Dominus* 14. On Vatican II as event see John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); on its liturgical reform see

contours of the RCIA are certainly revolutionary, and its vision of Christian conversion is breathtaking. But its official promulgation marked no more than a fragile first step. The visionary hopes and high ideals embedded within the Rite have, in the decades since its promulgation, too often been watered down or simply ignored. If the RCIA is to work the renewal it heralds, it will have to be far more profoundly implemented and integrated into the ordinary routine of parish life. Its implementation has proved a challenge on various fronts. First, it is a lengthy, complex document, one that requires careful study and prudent interpretation. Second, its vision of Christian initiation remains at odds with many of the Catholic Church's inherited liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical habits. Some of those habits have proved so deeply ingrained as to resist any recasting. Finally, the RCIA, like any blueprint, sketches some matters in only the barest outline. This is especially the case with its vision of catechesis. If the Rite is to enter into the depths and fiber of the church's everyday life, its catechetical principles will have to become second nature and its catechetical gaps filled in by a robust and deeply considered pedagogy. It is precisely the RCIA's catechetical sketchiness and often lackluster implementation over the last few decades that has prompted this investigation.

In this introduction I begin by surveying two matters: first, what the RCIA legislates and, second, what it implies. These set out the Rite's vocabulary and dynamics and give some sense of the high stakes involved in its implementation. In the third section I mark out the Rite's catechetical gaps and silences. In the final section I set out a proposal for addressing these: that we embark on a process of *ressourcement*, a "return to the sources," and begin to map out and harvest the catechetical wisdom of the early church as an aid and a challenge to contemporary catechesis. This book will seek—in a limited, focused way—to do just that, doing so via a single in-depth case study. In this investigation I seek to reconstruct what we know of the catechumenate of one of the most influential of the early church fathers, Augustine of Hippo (354–430).

Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press [A Pueblo Book], 2012).

My focus will be on Augustine the teacher, to reconstruct what we can of his day-to-day teaching of candidates for baptism and what his reflections on such teaching were.

WHAT THE RCIA SAYS

The RCIA describes the initiation of adults as "a spiritual journey," one that, throughout its length and breadth, "bear[s] a markedly paschal character."[3] To plot out this journey, the Consilium, the committee of experts charged by Pope Paul VI to oversee the reform of Catholic liturgy after Vatican II, turned for guidance to ancient "maps": patristic church orders, sermons, sacramentaries.[4] This turn to Christian antiquity was sparked not by some romantic yearning for the archaic. Those working on the Consilium believed that they found in these ancient Christian documents a forgotten wisdom—a theological vision, a psychological sensitivity, a pastoral realism—a wisdom that, despite its antiquity, spoke to contemporary needs. Balthasar Fischer, who chaired the baptism study group within the Consilium, noted what motivated the turn to antiquity: "It was not our intention to keep ancient texts merely because they were old or for nostalgic reasons, but because these texts, while they linked us with the past, still answered contemporary needs. The ancient texts treated Christian initiation as what it really is, a *process*, and [they] related that process to human nature."[5] Drawing on these ancient texts, the Consilium resurrected a complex ensemble of rites, stages, and practices that had once

[3] RCIA §§5 and 8.

[4] On committee structure, drafts, and processes that gave rise to the RCIA, see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), esp. 584–97. Bugnini's account is indispensable since he worked for over a decade as the Consilium's secretary and had spent decades at the forefront of the entire liturgical reform. The larger Consilium was made up of various more specialized "study groups." Study Group 22, chaired by Balthasar Fischer, was the primary one responsible for the RCIA.

[5] Quoted in Walter Ciesak, "RCIA: Looking Back—an Interview with Fr. Balthasar Fischer," *Modern Liturgy* 11 (June–August, 1984): 7. See also Balthasar Fischer, "The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Rediscovery and

guided the early church. It began by dividing the journey of Christian initiation into four "periods": (1) evangelization, (2) catechumenate, (3) purification/enlightenment, and (4) mystagogy. It then punctuated the transition between these periods with three rites of passage, or "steps": (a) acceptance into the order of catechumens, (b) election, and (c) sacraments of initiation.[6] (For a summary of these periods and rites, see chart 1.)

The first period, evangelization, is to be a time for hearing the Gospel of "the living God" and of "Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all." Newcomers should taste some initial conversion, one powerful enough to cause them "to feel called away from sin and drawn into the mystery of God's love." Upon this initial conversion, newcomers are welcomed at the first of the public rites, the Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens. This rite serves as an occasion for mutual commitment: "candidates . . . declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn . . . embraces the catechumens as its own with a mother's love and concern."[7] Candidates are signed with the cross, first on the forehead, then on the ears, eyes, lips, heart, shoulders, hands, and feet. The presider then invites them "to share with us at the table of God's word."[8] After the sermon but before the liturgy of the Eucharist, the candidates—now referred to as "catechumens"—are prayed for, then dismissed with a blessing.[9] This initial rite "marks their reception and first consecration by the Church." These new

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New Beginnings," *Worship* 64 (1990): 98–106, citing pivotal historical episodes and broader principles that shaped the Consilium's work.

[6] RCIA §6 refers to these rites of passage as "steps" or "gateways" through which candidates pass to "ascend to the next level."

[7] RCIA §§36–37, 41, 47. This echoes *Lumen Gentium* 14.

[8] RCIA §60. Only the signing on the forehead is required; the others are optional (§§55–56). The signing on the forehead was the patristic practice; the multiple signations were a Gallican addition.

[9] The Rite stresses that the "catechumens are normally dismissed" before the eucharistic liturgy itself; however, it does make such a dismissal optional, but only for "serious reasons": RCIA §§67, 75.3.

catechumens are henceforth to be regarded as "Christians," as "part of the household of Christ."[10]

This rite is the gateway into the second period, the catechumenate. The catechumenate is to be a time for more than mere schooling in Christian doctrine; it is to be, as Vatican II speaks of it, an apprenticeship in Christian living.[11] It is an intricate venture accomplished not in a few hurried sessions but more leisurely, over a span "long enough—several years if necessary—for the conversion and faith of the catechumens to become strong."[12] Catechumens continue to attend the Sunday liturgy of the Word, just as they did in the early church. Week after week the same pattern is kept: readings, sermon, prayer, blessing, dismissal. Along the way catechumens are to receive "suitable catechesis . . . gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year."[13] This catechesis should do more than instruct in dogmas and precepts. It should instill in the catechumens a "profound sense of the mystery of salvation."[14] It should not only instruct them in ways of prayer but also give them some experience of these. Finally, it should focus on the practical and the moral "to implant in their hearts . . . the morality characteristic of the New Testament, the forgiving of injuries and insults, a sense of sin and repentance, the duties Christians must carry out in the world."[15] Such catechesis should take place at least some of the time within a liturgical setting.[16]

[10] RCIA §§41, 47. This phraseology is from Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4, and is quoted in Vatican II's *Ad gentes* 14.

[11] Vatican II, *Ad gentes* 14: "The catechumenate . . . is not merely an exposition of dogmatic truths and norms of morality, but a period of formation in the entire christian life."

[12] RCIA §76.

[13] RCIA §75.1.

[14] RCIA §75.1.

[15] RCIA §82.

[16] The 1988 American edition suggests that "celebrations of the word may . . . be held *in connection with* catechetical or instructional meetings of the catechumens, *so that these will occur in a context of prayer*" (§81–89; emphasis added). It also suggests an outline: (i) an opening song, (ii) readings and responsorial psalms, (iii) homily, and (iv) concluding rites (an exorcism,

All this clearly moves against the grain of inherited practices. No longer can catechists content themselves with presenting theological summaries lifted from official catechisms. No longer is it sufficient to win mere assent to propositions. Rather, the goal and measure of catechesis is not only changed minds but also changed hearts and changed lives. Catechumens are to give public witness to a "progressive change of outlook and conduct," and that progress should be "manifest by means of its social consequences."[17] Catechumens should begin to embody a vigorous love of neighbor, a virtue honed and won at the cost of self-renunciation. Catechumens are expected to begin to mirror the church's life, and since the church's life is apostolic, that of the catechumens should be so as well. To strengthen their resolve they receive a complex of blessings, exorcisms, and anointings. This whole journey of faith depends both on the grace of God and on local circumstance (needs of catechumens, character of the local assembly, availability of ministers). For this reason "nothing . . . can be settled a priori."[18]

Throughout this period, sponsors play a pivotal role. They are, as in the early church, to apprentice catechumens into the everyday rhythms and demands of Christian living. Sponsors are to show catechumens "how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain [them] in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide [their] progress in the baptismal life." Because of this close relationship, sponsors "stand as witnesses to the candidates' moral character, faith, and intention."[19] Sponsors thus play a dual role: on the one hand they are witnesses *to* the catechumens, testifying as much by deed as by word how one incarnates gospel imperatives; on the other hand they are witnesses *for* the catechumens, testifying on the catechumens' behalf before the liturgical assembly.

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a blessing, or an anointing). This mirrors the presumption of the ancient texts: that liturgy is the normal context for catechesis.

[17] RCIA §75.2.

[18] RCIA §76.

[19] RCIA §§9–11.

The third period, that of purification and enlightenment, coincides with Lent. It begins with the Rite of Election, presided over by the local bishop and celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent. The assembly first seeks out public testimony from sponsors and catechists, much as it did in the early church. The catechumens are then enrolled for baptism, their names inscribed in the Book of the Elect. During the weeks that follow, candidates (now referred to as "the elect") go through a "more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction"; they are to purify mind and heart and do penance.[20] On the third, fourth, and fifth Sundays of Lent special readings are assigned; these invite them to grapple with classic images from John's Gospel: Christ the living water (John 4), Christ the light of the world (John 9), and Christ the resurrection and the life (John 11).[21] On these same Sundays, after the homily, candidates undergo the great exorcisms known as "scrutinies."[22] These rites are to inspire self-searching and repentance, to "uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good."[23] Also during the weeks just before Easter the elect receive—as they did in the early church—the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, those "ancient

[20] RCIA §139.

[21] RCIA §143. These rites draw on the *missae pro scrutiniis* preserved in the Gelasian Sacramentary. See Antoine Chavasse, "La structure du Carême et les lectures des messes quadragesimales dans la liturgie romaine," *La Maison-Dieu* 31 (1952): 76–120; idem, "Temps de préparation à la Pâque, d'après quelques livres liturgiques romains," *Recherches de science religieuse* 37 (1950): 125–45. For a summary see Maxwell E. Johnson, "From Three Weeks to Forty Days: Baptismal Preparation and the Origins of Lent," *Studia Liturgica* 20 (1990): 185–200, reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit: Readings on Christian Initiation*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 118–36.

[22] Balthasar Fischer, "Baptismal Exorcism in the Catholic Baptismal Rites after Vatican II," *Studia Liturgica* 10 (1974): 48–55, at 53, notes the exorcisms in the RCIA are no longer "imprecatory" but "deprecatory"; "we no longer speak to the Devil (considered as being present); we speak with God about the Devil (still considered as personal)."

[23] RCIA §§141, 143.

texts that have always been regarded as expressing the heart of the Church's faith and prayer."[24] Finally, on Holy Saturday the elect withdraw to a quiet place to pray, fast, and reflect. Two rites may be held at this time: the Recitation of the Creed, in which the elect formally recite the symbol of faith they have been given, and the Ephphetha, an exorcism of ear and mouth meant to impress "on the elect their need of grace in order that they may hear the word of God and profess it for their salvation."[25]

That night, at the Easter Vigil, the most sacred liturgy of the year, the church celebrates the climax of this long journey with the rites of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. The choice of the Vigil is critical. As Aidan Kavanagh once noted:

> The insistence on the Easter Vigil as the normal setting for Christian initiation is neither ecclesiastical nostalgia nor doctrinal wistfulness. There is simply no other time of the year, and certainly no other liturgical context, that serves as so rich a setting for sacramental initiation and its meaning. Not only are the initiates dying and rising in Christ as the Church commemorates his passage from death to life long ago. More importantly the initiates are entering into his corporate real presence which is the Church. . . . Only the Easter Vigil yields up an ecclesiology worthy of baptism.[26]

The RCIA insists that the sacraments be celebrated as they were originally, as a unified, integral succession of rites. No longer is baptism to be separated from confirmation, whether by days or by years; it is to take place immediately afterward.[27] For this to occur,

[24] RCIA §147. The Rite specifies that the Presentation of the Creed takes place during the third week of Lent (i.e., following the first scrutiny); the Presentation of the Lord's Prayer takes place during the fifth week of Lent (i.e., following the third scrutiny). Alternatively they may be anticipated during the period of the Catechumenate; see RCIA §§79, 104–5, 147.

[25] RCIA §§193–99. The presentation of the Lord's Prayer may also take place at this time (§189).

[26] Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 134–35.

[27] RCIA §§215, 217: "In accord with the ancient practice followed in the Roman liturgy, adults are *not to be baptized without receiving confirmation im-*

the RCIA includes a history-altering provision: the priest who confers baptism is the one who also confers confirmation.[28] This moves against a centuries-long Latin tradition of reserving the conferring of confirmation to bishops. The RCIA also sets out immersion as the preferred form of baptism.[29] No longer should baptism be a few dribbles of water on the forehead. It is again to resemble what it is: a bath, a plunge into enough water that one can taste and feel water's death-dealing and life-giving power.

The fourth and final period, that of mystagogy, begins after Easter and extends until Pentecost. The newly baptized (now called "neophytes") receive a genre of catechesis widely used in the early church but still largely unknown in the present one: mystagogy, that is, a "teaching of the mysteries." These explore the rites of initiation—the gestures, the symbols, the words—in terms of their biblical resonances and their import for Christian life. During the liturgies of the Easter season neophytes may sit in a special section of the church.[30] This silently but powerfully highlights their new status and marks them as people deserving the assembly's special

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mediately afterward, unless some serious reason stands in the way. The conjunction of the two celebrations signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized. . . . Finally in the celebration of the eucharist, as they take part for the first time and with full right, the newly baptized reach the culminating point in their Christian initiation" (emphasis added). For an analysis, see Aidan Kavanagh, *Confirmation: Origins and Reform* (New York: Pueblo, 1988), 85–86.

[28] RCIA §14. Balthasar Fischer, "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Rediscovery and New Beginnings," 103, notes how much resistance the Consilium faced on this, that it "succeeded—but not without considerable psychological difficulties expressed by the bishops—in safeguarding the classic sequence of the sacraments of initiation." Fischer once noted: "If I am proud of anything, I am proud of having convinced the bishops that they should give permission to the priest to confirm" ("Interview with Balthasar Fischer," *Chicago Catechumenate* 6, no. 2 [Dec. 1983], 11).

[29] RCIA §26. While the RCIA does allow for pouring water over the head as a possible option, it lists immersion first. See Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 138.

[30] RCIA §248.

care. Pentecost marks the neophytes' completion of their long pilgrimage. The Rite adds that "on the anniversary of their baptism the neophytes should be brought together in order to give thanks to God, to share with one another their spiritual experiences, and to renew their commitment."[31]

WHAT THE RCIA IMPLIES

The RCIA is more than a collection of rites and rubrics. It is, more deeply, a fundamental reenvisioning of the mission and character of Christian community. In resurrecting ancient and long-forgotten rituals, practices, and stages it seeks to retrieve an ancient and quite radical vision of the church, one that places conversion at the very heart of Christian experience. It reshapes community roles, radically redefines the contours of catechesis, and sees baptism as the taproot and catalyst for lifelong transformation. Let us pause here for a moment to savor and probe some of these implications.

First, the RCIA reverses a centuries-old habit: privatizing Christian initiation. No longer is the formation of converts a few hasty months of private instruction in doctrine. No longer is conversion a private matter, worked out in hushed anonymity between convert and parish priest. No longer is baptism to be a quiet affair, a small gathering of family and friends held any Saturday afternoon. Instead, initiation once more assumes the honor, the centrality, and the symbolic amplitude it enjoyed in the early church. Converting individuals now assume center stage in the assembly's worship. Before the entire assembly their motives are examined and their commitments made public. Before it they are lavished with blessings, healed with exorcisms, strengthened with anointings. Week after week they are solemnly dismissed in a vivid—even threatening—gesture meant to catechize faithful and catechumen alike on the high dignity of baptism. Through it all "their faith, progress, and prognosis in communal faith-living are the concerns of the

[31] RCIA §250. The RCIA, by conceiving mystagogy as a fifty-day period between Easter and Pentecost, differs from most early Christian churches in which mystagogy lasted a single week.

entire local church met for solemn public worship."[32] This public witness assumes its richest expression at the Vigil. This means, as Keifer has noted, that "the celebration of the paschal mystery finds its axis and concrete manifestation in the baptism, confirmation, and eucharist of newly baptized adults. . . . The revelation of Christ's saving, healing, and redeeming power in our midst is the making of Christians. . . . [This marks] a breathtaking departure from the recent past."[33]

Second, the RCIA insists that ministry, both lay and ordained, be vibrant, that it permeate the very sinews of the church. It presumes that within every assembly there are enough master Christians to apprentice catechumens in the intricate art of gospel-living. As Kavanagh has cogently put it: "One learns how to fast, pray, repent, celebrate, and serve the good of one's neighbors less by being lectured on these matters than by close association with people who do these things with regular ease and flair."[34] Restoring the catechumenate calls for the renewal and recasting of the traditional ministries of priests, deacons, catechists, and sponsors. But the Rite insists that the ministry of initiation is not the preserve of an elite, ordained or otherwise, but is the responsibility of all the baptized, that the whole assembly acts as evangelist, catechist, sponsor, deacon, priest. In the long run this may give fresh substance to the phrase "priesthood of all believers" and help us savor that "*laos* is a priestly name for a priestly person."[35] Ultimately the RCIA calls the church to see and to be what it is: the people of God sent on a world-shaking and world-transforming mission—evangelizing, witnessing, teaching, serving, healing, dying to self, and rising to new life.

Third, the RCIA resurrects the long-forgotten order of catechumens. This means that we need to adjust our conceptions about

[32] Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 128.

[33] Keifer, "Christian Initiation: The State of the Question," *Made Not Born*, 139.

[34] Kavanagh, *Shape of Baptism*, 131.

[35] Aidan Kavanagh, "Unfinished and Unbegun Revisited: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults," *Worship* 53 (1979): 327–40, at 336; reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 259–73, at 269.

what constitutes membership and begin to take seriously the Rite's—and Vatican II's—words about catechumens as "already part of the household of Christ." It also implies something about the role of catechumens in the ecology of the church's life. When the local assembly witnesses catechumens feasting at the table of God's word it should find itself called to examine how the Scriptures nourish its own heart and mind. When it witnesses catechumens spending years hungering for the Eucharist it should find itself called to examine how that Eucharist sustains its own graced life. When it witnesses catechumens feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the dying, it should find itself called to ponder the depth of its own apostolic vocation. Catechumens are not simply recipients of the church's ministry. They too are ministers, agents of its transformation.

Fourth, the RCIA restores the sacraments of initiation to their earlier order and ritual proximity. No longer is baptism to be separated from confirmation by weeks or even years, as happened in the medieval church.[36] This restoration of the practice of the Latin church of the early centuries seeks to reverse what Nathan Mitchell has called the "dissolution of Christian initiation," a "ritual breakdown" that "resonates throughout Christian faith, catechesis, theology, and praxis."[37] This reform is much more than ritual fine-tuning or archaeological restoration. It is an attempt, as Mark Searle once noted, to present "a powerful symbolic redescription of what it means to be Christian": "That a Christian is one who is identified with the dead and exalted Christ by the power of the Spirit" and who is united with his Body by that common fellowship, meal, and sacrifice we call Eucharist.[38]

[36] On this medieval breakdown see Nathan Mitchell, "Dissolution of the Rite of Christian Initiation," 50–82 in *Made, Not Born*, which draws on the classic study of J. G. Davies, "The Disintegration of the Christian Initiation Rite," *Theology* 50 (1947): 407–12. See also J. D. C. Fisher's study, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: SPCK, 1965). For an overview see Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation*, 245–67.

[37] Mitchell, "Dissolution of the Rite of Christian Initiation," 50.

[38] Mark Searle, "Issues in Christian Initiation: Uses and Abuses of the RCIA," *Living Light* 22 (1986): 199–214, at 200.

This shift toward a reintegrated celebration may gradually reconfigure the deeper contours of Christian self-understanding. For Catholic Christians, sacraments are essential to the grammar of faith. This grammar, like that of any language, works beneath the surface, mediating meanings, establishing canons of intelligibility, structuring what is expressible and what is not. Because of this grammatical shift within the sacraments of initiation we may again savor confirmation's baptismal moorings and probe its messianic and pneumatological themes. Because of this we may again come to appreciate the way confirmation is a Spirit-filled rite of passage that leads one *from* the Spirit-imbued waters of baptism and *to* the Spirit-endowed table of Eucharist. Because of this we may begin to recognize Eucharist—rather than confirmation—as the apex of Christian initiation, as *the* sacrament of Christian maturity.[39] In altering our symbols—particularly ones as important as how one becomes and remains Christian—we may find our way to a new corporate sense of identity and purpose.

Fifth, the RCIA implies that adult baptism should once more serve as the *norm* for Christian initiation.[40] This does not mean abandonment of infant baptism, nor does it mean that infant baptism will cease to be the most common way people enter the ranks of the faithful. To raise such concerns is to misunderstand what a norm is and how it functions. As Kavanagh has noted, "A norm has nothing to do with the number of times a thing is done, but it has everything to do with the standard to which a thing is done."[41] Norms, whether those of the church or of civil society, set standards of judgment. They help us decipher what is normal, what is abnormal but *permissible*, and what is abnormal and *impermissible*. What does this mean for baptism? Once we begin to experience the Rite as our norm we may again come to recognize the weighty demands and spacious contours of Christian initiation: that initiation,

[39] Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 177. On this see Nathan Mitchell, *Eucharist as Sacrament of Initiation*, Forum Essay 2 (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994).

[40] On this see Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 102–25.

[41] Ibid., 109.

in the richest sense, should happen in stages and with a panoply of rites; that it demands faith and conversion; that it involves community and apostolic commitment; that it is accomplished slowly, if need be, over a period of years; that it is best celebrated at the Easter Vigil; that its sacramental expression includes not just bathing but also anointing and feasting. Set against such a norm, infant baptism will seem more like a "piano reduction" when compared to the Rite's full "symphonic orchestration." In infant baptism the melodies may all be there, but scarcely with their full-voiced sonorities.[42]

Sixth, the RCIA sets out a rich, multifaceted vision of conversion.[43] It insists that authentic conversion demands more than some sudden born-again experience or shift in institutional allegiance; it requires transformation of the whole person. It envisions human life as a journey of ongoing conversion that begins long before the person approaches the local church and continues long after the person enters its ranks. It presumes that the conversion experience has its seasons, and that at pivotal moments that experience requires ritual expression. It envisages conversion as the forging of a sacred pact between God and convert and is clear that in this covenant-making the initiative is always God's. The RCIA insists that conversion is Christ-centered and expresses that centeredness in rite after rite, initially by the signing of the cross on catechumens' foreheads, later by a water-bath that marks their

[42] Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism*, 109–14, is especially critical of *quamprimum* infant baptism and regards certain cases of infant baptism as a "benign abnormality" (in cases of emergencies or of especially faithful parents), but he considers much current practice as "pastoral malfeasance" and "theological obsession." Mark Searle, "The RCIA and Infant Baptism," *Worship* 56 (1982): 327–32, sharply criticizes Kavanagh's perspectives, arguing that baptism possesses meanings beyond the Pauline death-resurrection motif and that infant baptism better highlights themes such as adoption, divinization, and indwelling. See also Paul F. X. Covino, "The Postconciliar Infant Baptism Debate in the American Catholic Church," *Worship* 56 (1982): 240–60, reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 327–49.

[43] On this see Robert Duggan, "Conversion in the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 96 (1982): 57–83, 209–32; 97 (1983): 141–223.

"sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ," and finally by the Eucharist that signs their incorporation into Christ.[44] The RCIA insists that conversion, far from being an individual matter, is an event of the church as a whole. Ultimately, it conceives of conversion as the genesis of the church itself.[45]

Finally, the RCIA sets out a formidable agenda for religious educators. Balthasar Fischer stated that he and the other members of the Study Group explicitly intended "to do away with [the] school mentality, that cerebral way of entering the Church."[46] They were concerned that catechists recognize that "the catechumenate is not a school, but an initiation: the school has some students who learn a lesson; initiation has some disciples who discover a life."[47] The Rite presumes that catechists can speak with equal fluency the plural languages of catechesis: certainly that of instruction, but also of evangelization and apprenticeship, of spiritual direction and mystagogy. It demands not only that they be capable of handing on the church's rich, pluriform traditions; it insists that they propose a practicable ethics, that they catalyze interior explorations, guide prayer, and discern spirits, that they nurture apostolic action and embody a virtue worth imitating. It asks that catechists not only be fluent in an array of catechetical languages but also be attuned to a process more circular than linear: not so much "a graduated program" but rather a "series of explorations that radiate outward from the gospels into every area of personal, ecclesial, and social living, flowing back again into the meditative reading of the scriptures, the practice of prayer, and the elicitation of commitments."[48] It presumes that catechists will be experts in the fine art of "conversion therapy"—to use Kavanagh's often quoted and much misunderstood coinage. Kavanagh does not mean

[44] RCIA §§55, 64; 66; 8; 233; 217.

[45] Duggan, "Conversion in the *OICA*," 211.

[46] Fischer, quoted in "An Interview with Balthasar Fischer," *Chicago Catechumenate* 6 (1983): 7

[47] André Aubry, quoted in Thomas Ivory, "The Restoration of the Catechumenate as a Norm for Catechesis," *Living Light* 20 (1976): 225–35, at 230.

[48] Searle, "Issues in Christian Initiation," 202.

therapy in the psychological sense; he means a catechesis capable of nurturing people through the trauma of God's iconoclastic grace, of protecting them "from the Church's insensitivity to the crisis," and of bringing both church and convert into a sustained relationship called "communion."[49] All this presumes high standards and considerable expertise. The problem is this: The RCIA, since it is a ritual document, offers few resources for such a formidable agenda. This may account for the often workmanlike implementation to date. It also names the impetus that has inspired this study.

WHAT THE RCIA DOES NOT SAY

In the early 1980s, as the RCIA was just beginning to be implemented around the United States, I was assigned to work in a small Hispanic parish in Houston, Texas. Careful study of the Rite had alerted me to its potential, but as we began implementing it in the parish we soon discovered its catechetical gaps and silences. While individual rites were often new or unfamiliar, enacting them was fairly straightforward since the Rite spelled out matters in good detail (though, of course, their actual performance required planning, reflection, and a healthy measure of creativity). By contrast, the RCIA's perspectives on catechesis, while provocative and innovative, remained sketchy. As we discovered, the Rite offered little help on four catechetical issues critical to its implementation:

1. *Curriculum*: The RCIA is largely silent about curriculum. It specifies that each period has its own curricular goal (that is, evangelization, apprenticeship, repentance, immersion into mystery). But it offers few specifics. Yet educators who implement the Rite have to ask: What specifically are we to teach? What specific experiences should catechumens have of God and of community? What do they need to know, to feel, to taste, to do? What stories, what beliefs, what practices? What order should these things be given in? And in what depth?

2. *Teaching Styles*: The RCIA is also silent about how one teaches these things. Yet educators must ask: How might specific beliefs,

[49] Kavanagh, "Introduction: Christian Initiation: Tactics and Strategy," 1–6 in *Made, Not Born*, at 4.

moral precepts, and virtues be best taught or nurtured? What methods best respect the dignity, call, and needs of catechumens? How specifically should catechists—in partnership with pastors, sponsors, and assembly—apprentice catechumens in the Christian life? Does one lecture? If so, how much? What about discussions? Small groups? Pairing of candidates and sponsors? Should candidates be encouraged to speak about their own experiences, whether of conversion or prayer or manner of life, or about their personal reflections on the Scriptures or moral issues? If so, how much and when? Should one require candidates to do service? If so, how much? How should teachers help them reflect on such experiences? Does each period, in accord with its specific character, demand different teaching methods, dynamics, and venues?

3. *Conversion*: The RCIA, as we saw, sets out a multifaceted vision of conversion, yet educators must worry about how this is to be fostered and discerned in the concrete. How, in practical terms, does such conversion manifest itself in the candidate? What evidence should one look for? In terms of catechesis: how should the curriculum and teaching styles converge so as to aid and nurture the intricate conversion the Rite calls for? It speaks of the community of the faithful "joining the catechumens . . . [in] renewing their own conversion."[50] Implied in this is a recognition that the church too is in need of conversion. The problem is this: catechumens confront a church, both locally and worldwide, in need of reform. As a catechist, one has to ask: How does one bring the energy, insights, and charisms of the catechumens to challenge both the local community and the larger church? How does one avoid using the Rite simply as an instrument for socialization, for maintaining the status quo? How does one give catechumens a realistic sense of both the wisdom and the weaknesses of the church and at the same time honor their idealism and encourage them to help reform our communities?

4. *Faith and Culture*: The RCIA is a document for the universal church, but new members are initiated into quite specific local

[50] RCIA §4.

communities rooted in quite specific cultures. The Houston church I worked in was shaped both by its Hispanic cultural traditions and by its American setting. This bicultural character, in turn, shaped its social life, its liturgical habits, its popular pieties. Thus we had to discern: What is the interplay of the faith of the larger church and its local embodiment? To what extent does one pass on traditions of local popular piety? Which of these are helpful and nurturing and which are inessential? The people of the parish were, in the main, quite poor. They routinely faced prejudice and suffered deeply from prevailing economic and political structures. Thus it became critical to ask: How does one help catechumens make an option for the poor? How does one help them develop a faith-tempered critical stance to the dominant American culture?

The RCIA is what it calls itself: a rite. But the catechetical is woven into the very fabric of this rite.[51] Addressing such catechetical gaps and silences is not an option. And if pastors and catechists rely on an ill-conceived or ineptly enacted catechesis, they risk undermining the Rite's power and subverting its pastoral vision.

In the decades since its promulgation, educators have worked to concretize the RCIA's sketchy ideals and fill in its catechetical gaps and silences.[52] The first impulse in many parishes was—and

[51] Aidan Kavanagh, "Critical Issues in the Growth of the RCIA in North America," *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation* 10 (1988): 10–21, at 10–11: "The RCIA must not be perceived to be a program or, as one often hears, a process. It is what it says it is: a rite. . . . [It] must be perceived and dealt with as such. And good liturgy does not proceed from our confusing it with educational programs or therapeutic processes." True, but certain conundrums in the implementation have been due to its catechetical sketchiness.

[52] The US Catholic bishops have sought, in broad terms, to fill in elements by setting forth essential themes and pedagogical guidelines; see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2005), which says that "the baptismal catechumenate is the source of inspiration for *all* catechesis" (p. 115). For a study of the implementation of the catechumenate at the parish level, see the five case studies examined by David Yamane and Sarah MacMillen, with Kelly Culver, *Real Stories of Christian Initiation: Lessons for and from the RCIA* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006).

still often is—to rely on a catechism to define the curriculum. Often this has been coupled with a lecture approach. In such catechumenates the theological content may be erudite and unequivocally orthodox, but the dynamic remains that of the old convert class: doctrinal in focus and cognitivist in conception of faith. Other parishes draw on a catechism for their outline of topics but couple this with various group-centered and experience-centered methods. Both approaches honor the RCIA's call for a catechesis "complete in its coverage" but ignore its very next phrase: that catechesis be "accommodated to the liturgical year."[53] But there is a deeper problem: both, often unconsciously, transmute the RCIA into a classroom enterprise where one learns lots about Christianity rather than an entry into a graced mystery whereby one slowly finds one's way to becoming Christian.

Still other parishes have sought to honor the RCIA's call to accommodate catechesis to the rhythms of the liturgical year by centering their gatherings around the church's cycle of readings.[54] This has some advantages. It ensures that candidates directly grapple with the Scriptures and that those catechumens who have only a scant familiarity with its narratives and teachings acquire a basic biblical literacy. More deeply, this approach ensures that the word of God remains central. Catechumens are formed by and in that word. In the long run this provides converting individuals with a language to begin to root and orient and articulate the contours and rhythms of their conversion. This method, however, risks losing touch with the wider Christian tradition. We who are Catholic Christians do not tend to leap from the Bible to the present as

[53] RCIA §75.1.

[54] The North American Forum on the Catechumenate promoted this lectionary-based approach for many years; see, for example, Karen M. Hinman Powell and Joseph P. Sinwell, eds., *Breaking Open the Word of God: Resources for Using the Lectionary for Catechesis in the RCIA* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986–1988). It did so not only in publications but also in the workshops it offered in dioceses across the United States. I should note that the Forum officially closed its national office on June 28, 2013. Other experiments in contemporary approaches to RCIA catechesis can be found by surveying pastoral publications, especially *Catechumenate: A Journal of Christian Initiation*.

though there had been no Christians in the centuries in between. We understand ourselves as inheritors of a vast, rich, and sacred tradition. We presume that the many, many generations of Christians who came before us possessed a profound, grace-filled wisdom and that they therefore have profound things to say to those of us alive now, whether their speaking be via the medium of established doctrine or theological reflection, of public liturgy or popular piety, of mystical spirituality or moral teaching. That tradition certainly includes vital, faith-defining official teachings but it also includes much, much more: saints worth imitating; artwork and music and literature worth exploring; prayer forms worth embracing; a moral vision that aspires to, indeed, requires us to seek to reshape and heal a broken world. Does such a liturgical-readings pedagogy honor such tradition? Do candidates come to meet their ancestors in faith? Do they become conversant in, at home with, and committed to the very tradition to which they are committing their lives?

THE INVESTIGATION

While educators have been experimenting with various pedagogies in hopes of both guiding catechumens to communion and respecting the RCIA's lofty vision, no less striking is what they have *not* been doing: turning to patristic authors for guidance. That may, on first hearing, sound rather odd. Yet turning to patristic authors is precisely what the liturgists who created the Rite did, and it is precisely what contemporary commentators on the Rite do. These liturgists and these commentators have argued that *if we want to interpret the RCIA accurately, then we need to understand the patristic sources that gave rise to it*. In this study I want to take the perspective of these liturgists and these commentators one step further and apply it to the RCIA's catechetical dimension. I will argue that *if the church has found itself renewed by the wisdom and richness of these ancient rituals and their underlying pastoral vision, then the church might find itself similarly renewed by our gleaning the best from ancient styles of and perspectives on catechesis*.

What I am proposing here—and calling for—is a sustained and in-depth exercise in *ressourcement*, that is, a "return to the sources."

The term *ressourcement*, first coined by the French poet Charles Péguy (1873–1914), was popularized by the great Dominican theologian and architect of Vatican II, Yves Congar (1904–1995).[55] Congar, together with two other leading theologians of Vatican II, Henri de Lubac (1896–1991) and Jean Daniélou (1905–1974), championed *ressourcement* as a theological principle for the renewal of the church. All three focused their considerable scholarly energies especially on patristic sources to address an array of issues: liturgy, biblical interpretation, the nature of the church, the emergence of the hierarchy and the theology of the laity, the formation of doctrine and the nature of tradition. Their work dovetailed with and gave a deepened theological rationale for the Liturgical Movement that had begun earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century, and had focused on renewing contemporary liturgy through researches into the liturgies of the patristic era.[56] That research into patristic sources conducted by scholars within the Liturgical Movement, such as Odo Casel (1886–1948) and Josef Jungmann (1889–1975), laid the groundwork for the extraordinary series of liturgical

[55] On this movement and its key figures see Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); on the terminology and its background see John W. O'Malley, " 'The Hermeneutic of Reform': A Historical Analysis," Essay Series: "On the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II" (Set I), *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 517–46. On Congar's contribution see Gabriel Flynn, "*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*," 219–35 in *Ressourcement*; Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Anthony Oelrich, *A Church Fully Engaged: Yves Congar's Vision of Ecclesial Authority* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011).

[56] On the Liturgical Movement see Keith F. Pecklers, "*Ressourcement* and the Renewal of Catholic Liturgy: On Celebrating the New Rite," 318–32 in *Ressourcement*; André Haquin, "The Liturgical Movement and Catholic Ritual Revision," 696–720 in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Keith F. Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America, 1926–1955* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

reforms that flowed out from the council.[57] The RCIA itself is one such dramatic instance of this "return to the sources." The starting point for any such *ressourcement* was and remains a meticulous and multifaceted research. As Vatican II's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) expressed it: "In order that sound tradition be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, a careful investigation—theological, historical, and pastoral—should always, first of all, be made into each section of the liturgy which is to be revised."[58]

Ressourcement is an exercise in deep remembering. Consider someone with amnesia. Without memory, a person does not know who he or she is. Memory gives us our bearings. It tells us who we are, where we are going, why we do what we do. This is true not only for individuals. It applies no less to nations, to ethnic groups, and, of course, to the church. If we do not take care of our communal memory as church we risk losing our very selves, forgetting who we are, where we are going, why we do what we do.[59] *Ressourcement* as scholarly exercise does not offer easy or immediate solutions to current problems. Its power is deeper and more subtle. It puts us in touch with the depths of the tradition, what Jaroslav Pelikan has called "the living faith of the dead." Pelikan has argued—rightly, I believe—that to nurture the living faith of the living we need "to include the dead within the circle . . . of our conversation."[60] *Ressourcement* presumes that those who have gone

[57] On this see especially Bugnini, *Reform of the Liturgy*; Marini Piero, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal, 1963–1975,* ed. John R. Page and Keith F. Pecklers (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007); Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*; John F. Baldovin, "The Development of the Liturgy: Theological and Historical Roots of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*," *Worship* 87 (2013): 517–32.

[58] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 23. See Kathleen Hughes, "Meticulous Scholarship at the Service of a Living Liturgy," 21–32 in *Summit and Source: Commemorating Josef A. Jungmann, S.J.*, ed. Joanne M. Pierce and Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

[59] O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 41.

[60] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 82.

before us have something to say to us; that there exists a continuity between their living faith and ours; that they possess a wisdom, albeit a wisdom with quite definite limits, but a wisdom nonetheless. Robert Taft, one of the finest liturgical scholars of the last century, addressed with characteristic aplomb those who questioned the pastoral relevance of exploring Christian history (in this case, liturgical history):

> Amidst all the contemporary talk of "relevance" in matters liturgical it remains my first conviction that nothing is so relevant as knowledge, nothing so irrelevant as ignorance. . . . So in spite of the (to me) rather perplexing discomfort that many Americans seem to have with history, there can be no theology without it. . . . Christian liturgy is a given, an object, an already existing reality like English literature. One discovers what English literature is only by reading Chaucer and Shakespeare and Eliot and Shaw and the contemporaries. So too with liturgy. If we want to know what Christmas and Chrismation, Eucharist and Easter mean, we shall not get far . . . by asking ourselves what we *think* they mean. We must plunge into the enormous stream of liturgical and patristic evidence and wade through it piece by piece, age by age, ever alert to pick up shifts in the current as each generation reaches for its own understanding of what it is we are about.[61]

What Taft says here about the study of the history of liturgy is no less applicable to the study of the history of catechesis. For nearly two centuries liturgical scholars have plunged into that vast, deep stream of patristic evidence, examining it piece by piece, age by age, doing so with sensitivity and acuity of insight. There has been no comparable investigation of Christian catechesis.

The catechumenate as resurrected by the RCIA was, in its origins, a patristic creation, and the church fathers who shaped it were themselves gifted teachers and, on occasion, gifted theorists of teaching. Their example and their counsels may help us not only

[61] Robert F. Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1997), ix–x.

restore the rites of the catechumenate but also craft a pedagogy appropriate to the subtle and often mysterious task of Christian initiation. These authors worked in a period prior to what has been called the "deritualization of catechesis." In that era catechesis and liturgy were not as they are now—separate endeavors, each with its own expertise, ideologies, and methods. The two intertwined, each influencing the other. Catechesis took place in a liturgical setting, its learnings prompted ritual expression, and each rite of passage led, in turn, to deeper, renewed catechetical explorations. Studies of the patristic catechumenate should sober us in healthy ways. For many the catechumenate is a novelty and, as one sometimes reads, a solution to all manner of ills within the church.[62] It was never that for the ancients. The catechumenate was simply part and parcel of the church's life. The church fathers knew well its power and its limits. They devoted great energy to its maintenance but they had no illusions about the mixed motives and flawed morals of the candidates their churches attracted.

If educators hope to act upon such a *ressourcement* of catechesis they will need a large library of scholarly literature that spells out in depth and detail the many and varied contours of patristic catechesis. The problem is that most existing scholarly literature on the ancient catechumenate gives, at best, scant attention to the concerns of educators. Most of this literature has been done by and for liturgists. Their contributions have been extraordinary, but their analyses tend, naturally enough, to focus on passages and perspectives relevant to liturgy. Few have approached the texts with an educator's eye in a sustained, systematic way. As Charles Paliard once remarked, "In the literature on the catechumenate,

[62] On the risks of romanticizing the liturgy of the fourth and fifth centuries, see Paul Bradshaw, "The Liturgical Use and Abuse of Patristics," 134–45 in *Liturgy Reshaped*, ed. Kenneth Stevenson (London: SPCK, 1982). See the response by John F. Baldovin, "The Uses of Liturgical History," *Worship* 82 (2008): 2–18, reprinted in his *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 158–73. I will return to this issue in the final chapter.

[catechesis] takes on the image of a 'poor relation.' "[63] This state of affairs is ironic since many of the remarkable fourth- and fifth-century documents that liturgists have been studying are transcripts of catecheses. Liturgical scholars use these *not* to study catechesis but rather to reconstruct from them the structure and contours of the ancient rites. Such study is certainly legitimate, but these ancient documents *also* need to be studied in terms of what they are: records of catechesis.

There is, as yet, no trustworthy history of the ancient catechumenate, nothing comparable to the histories we have on the ancient trinitarian debates or on the ancient eucharistic rites. The handful of existing surveys of ancient catechesis are far too brief and, in many cases, methodologically deficient.[64] Too often such surveys tout what "the Fathers said" or what "the Fathers did"—as though the different catechumenates were largely the same.[65] As Paul Bradshaw has noted, contemporary liturgical scholars stress the rich local diversity in the rites of Christian initiation and warn against the tendency of

[63] Charles Paliard, "The Place of Catechesis in the Catechumenate," in *Adult Baptism and the Catechumenate*, ed. Johannes Wagner, *Concilium* 22 (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 88.

[64] Often cited is Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries*, trans. Edward J. Hassl (New York: Sadlier, 1979); in the notes for chapters 1, 3, and 4, I note its flawed assumptions and arguments from silence. Other surveys include P. de Puniet, "Catechuménat," *DACL* 2:2579–2621; Lawrence D. Folkemer, "A Study of the Catechumenate," *Church History* 15 (1946): 286–307, reprinted in *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, SEC 11, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1993), 244–65; Josef Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*, trans. Francis A. Brunner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 74–86; Robert M. Grant, "Development of the Christian Catechumenate," 32–50 in *Made Not Born*.

[65] For example, Joseph Lecuyer, "Théologie de l'initiation chrétienne chez les Pères," *La Maison-Dieu* 58 (1959): 5–26; Maurice Jourion, "Catechèse et liturgie chez les Pères," *La Maison-Dieu* 140 (1979): 41–54. A contrast is the careful methodology used by Everett Ferguson's "Catechesis and Initiation," 229–68 in *The Origins of Christendom in the West*, ed. Alan Kreider (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001); he keeps clear the distinctive accent and style of each author he surveys.

an earlier generation of scholars to take evidence from diverse locales and harmonize it into a single picture.[66] Such harmonizing of patristic catechesis is no less misleading. Put simply, what may have been practiced in one region or in one era may have been absent in others. Such surveys gloss over the fact that surviving sources from the ancient catechumenate are often fragmentary, that we get more of a glimpse than a sustained portrait. Only a few studies have focused on a single locale and sought to reconstruct, with all deliberate caution, what its specific catechumenate looked like.[67] Only from a series of such studies can we hope eventually to have a general critical history of the ancient catechumenate.

Thus this investigation. It will be a case study, a sustained and in-depth exploration of a single ancient catechumenate, that of Augustine of Hippo. My primary focus will be on Augustine the catechist and preacher. While I take care to map out whatever one can unearth of the fifth-century North African liturgy, my concern is with Augustine's teaching, exploring what he did with his baptismal candidates, what he said to them, and what his reflections on the experience were. The approach will be to read the texts with an educator's eye, to chart the course and rhythms of his catechesis, to note what doctrines he thought urgent, what language he used, what feelings he roused, what actions he called for, how he envisioned conversion and how he nurtured it.

Chapter 1 provides the background, surveying inherited structures and broad trends within the fourth-century catechumenate. This will enable us to better situate and name Augustine's unique approach to things. Chapter 2 focuses on Augustine's own experience as a catechumen within the catechumenate in Milan. This will

[66] Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144–46.

[67] For example, Thomas M. Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967); also Craig Alan Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), who took his cues from the first edition of *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (see his comments on pp. xvii–xviii).

give important clues about Augustine's habits as a teacher of catechumens, the ways that he, like most of us, drew guidance from personal experience and, to some extent, taught others as he had been taught. The next chapters parallel, in a rough way, the four periods of the RCIA. I say "in a rough way" because the periods and rites of Augustine's catechumenate, while similar in some ways to those of the RCIA, do not match it precisely. Chapter 3 examines Augustine's approach to evangelization, particularly as he sets it out in his treatise *On Catechizing Beginners* (*De catechizandis rudibus*). Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the catechumenate period. In the fourth century, ordinary catechumens (as opposed to advanced ones) did not receive special instructions; they simply attended Sunday and weekday liturgies of the Word. This meant that their catechetical instruction came from whatever they could glean from ordinary sermons. Chapter 4 will therefore survey Augustine's day-to-day habits as a preacher as well as his theories on the art of preaching. Chapter 5 examines Augustine's approach to curriculum by studying a four-month sequence of sermons on John's gospel and the Psalms he gave to both catechumens and faithful. Chapter 6 focuses on his Lenten sermons to his advanced catechumens (or "petitioners," as he called them). These include his sermons on the scrutiny, on the handing over of the Creed, and on the handing over of the Lord's Prayer. Chapter 7 examines Augustine's mystagogical sermons, especially those given on Easter Sunday morning, during which he instructed the newly baptized on the Eucharist, and those given eight days later when they took off their baptismal robes and once more mixed in with the larger assembly. In chapter 8, I try to set out ways that Augustine's catechetical practices and reflections may be of value for contemporary catechesis.

In this study I will read sources, as I noted, with *an educator's eye*. Education can mean many things, of course, and contemporary educational theories and categories have, to a large degree, been shaped by the realities of schools; as we have seen, the catechumenate is not schooling and involves much more than matters intellectual. Therefore let me spell out briefly the educational lenses that shape this investigation. I have chosen ones that both respect the unique dynamics of the catechumenate and grapple with matters

of urgent concern to educators. The four catechetical "gaps and silences" of the RCIA I cited earlier provide the headings:

1. *Curriculum*—that is, the "what" of catechesis: What *past* traditions (stories, beliefs, practices, prayers) of the Christian community did Augustine hand on? What *present* experiences of God and of community did he see as constitutive? Specifically, what topics did he touch upon? What order did he follow? In what depth did he treat them? How did he envision interaction between different elements of his curriculum, that is, between instruction, liturgy, and day-to-day apprenticeship in Christian living? My approach will be to reconstruct his working curriculum from the topics embedded in what survives of his day-to-day catechesis.

2. *Teaching Styles*—that is, the "how" of catechesis. Here again, Augustine's varied approaches to teaching will have to be discerned from the surviving records we have of his practice. In analyzing these, key questions will be: How did he instruct? How did he gear his message to address both mind and heart? How did he try to educate the body (as a teacher of athletes would)?[68] How did he shape the symbolic imagination of his candidates (as a teacher of artists would)? How did he see the rites as educative? How did he interrelate rites and verbal instruction? In what settings did these take place?

3. *Conversion*—that is, the "why" of catechesis: Education is a teleological activity. Every act of education works, whether explicitly or implicitly, with distinct *ends* or *goals* in view and, as we saw, the goal of the catechumenate is conversion. Thus: How did Augustine see his curriculum and teaching styles converging so as to shape candidates' conversion? How did he envision conversion? As a journey? as Christ-centered? as ecclesial? By what standards did he evaluate it? Was it his primary goal, or were there others? Did he socialize candidates into an ecclesial status quo or did he alert them to community weaknesses and sinfulness? If so, how?

[68] Seeing the body as a focus of education is largely neglected in educational and catechetical discussions. Ancients, however, were quite conscious of it. See Henri Iréné Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), esp. 116–32.

What social habits and attitudes did he expect candidates to manifest in their day-to-day lives?

4. *Faith and Culture*—that is, the "where" of catechesis: Educators necessarily deal with specific people in a specific cultural, economic, social, ethnic, and intellectual milieu. This implies the need to use the methods of social history in such a way as to respect the social roots and moorings of Augustine's thought and practice. Thus it will be important to ask: How was his message shaped by his late fourth- / early fifth-century North African context? What economic, social, and ethnic realities did he address? How did religious movements and intellectual frameworks of that time shape his formulation? Did he envision any clash between his community's faith and the broader Roman culture? If so, how did he address it? How did he deal with differences between the faith expression of his local community and those of other churches?

Concentrating on Augustine and his catechumenate has its advantages and its challenges. He is the only patristic author from whom we possess a sampling of documents for each of the four periods of Christian initiation. We also possess an array of more theoretical reflections in which he speaks directly to one or another aspect of his understanding of the catechumenate and of catechesis, and these theoretical works can be compared with his actual practice, for which there is a large surviving body of texts. Even by a conservative count we have at least twenty-nine sermons (as well as four letters) directed to catechumens, nineteen to elect, and thirty-five to neophtyes (for a listing, see charts 4, 9, and 14). At least as important is that we can put all this into context with a precision virtually impossible with other ancient figures. Simply put, we know more about Augustine than about almost any other figure in the ancient world. Over the last century, scholars and archaeologists have uncovered extraordinarily detailed information about Augustine's church in Hippo Regius and the surrounding region. We also possess remarkably precise information on the history of fourth-century North Africa, not only religious events and conflicts but also its varied economic realities, its complex social structures, and its regional cultures.

Despite this wealth of information, Augustine's catechumenate has received relatively little attention from liturgists.[69] Most studies of the ancient catechumenate and the ancient rites of initiation concentrate on Augustine's contemporaries—Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia—partly because the data from each of these authors is limited to a handful of relatively accessible and fairly brief documents. With Augustine there is almost too much data, and that data defies easy collection, scattered as it is amid some nine hundred (unevenly edited) sermons. There are, as well, many scattered references in Augustine's letters, polemical works, and theological treatises. We have a sprawling jigsaw puzzle of data, much of it fragmentary. Surviving sermons do not, for the most part, represent what Augustine actually did in any given year. One important exception is, as we will see in chapter 5, a four-month sequence of sermons. Surviving sermons come from all periods of his career. Some can be dated precisely, others cannot. But the material is sufficiently rich to provide a set of tableaux from Augustine's catechumenate. For the purposes of this investigation, that should suffice.

[69] The classic reconstruction of the initiation rites in Augustine's church is by Benedict Busch, "*De initiatione christiana secundum sanctum Augustinum*," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938): 159–78; "*De modo quo sanctus Augustinus descripserit initiationem christianam*," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938): 385–483. Others include Frederic Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 347–87, 453–67; Suzanne Poque, "Introduction," *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermons pour la Pâque*, SC 116 (Paris: Cerf, 1966; rev. ed., 2003); R. DeLatte, "S. Augustin et le baptême: Étude liturgico-historique du rituel baptismal des adultes chez saint Augustin," *Questions liturgiques* 56 (1975): 177–223, and 57 (1976): 41–55; Victor Saxer, *Les rites de l'initiation chrétiennes du II^e^ au VI^e^ siècle: Esquisse historique et signification d'après leur principaux témoins* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1988), 381–99; Thomas M. Finn, "It Happened One Saturday Night: Ritual and Conversion in Augustine's North Africa," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 589–616. Few scholarly surveys of the ancient catechumenate and rites of initiation have incorporated such studies into their accounts; most discuss Augustine almost solely in terms of his teachings on infant baptism and on original sin.

Chart 1

The Rites and Structure of the RCIA

Period / Rite	Length / Date	Goal	Catechesis / Symbols
First Period:			
Evangelization	Not specified	*Initial conversion	*Hearing the Gospel
Name for Candidates: Inquirers			
First Step:			*Signed with cross
Acceptance into Order of Catechumens	Not specified	*Welcome	*Liturgy of Word
		*Mutual commitment	*Receive Bible
			[*Renunciation of false worship]
			[*New name]
Second Period:			
Catechumenate	1–3 years	*Strengthen faith	*Morality of New Testament
		*Sense mystery of salvation	*Prayer experience
		*Change of outlook and conduct	*Dogmas, precepts
Name for Candidates: Catechumens			*Apprenticeship in Christian life by sponsors
Rites during 2nd Period:			
a. Blessings	Anytime during period	*Sign of God's love & church's care	
b. Exorcisms		*Need for God's help in struggle	
c. Anointings		*Strengthening faith, hold to it	
Second Step:			
Election, enrollment of names	First Sunday of Lent	*Approval of candidates for baptism	*Inquiry by bishop on candidates
			*Affirmation by godparents
			*Enroll names

Chart 1—Cont'd

The Rites and Structure of the RCIA

Period / Rite	Length / Date	Goal	Catechesis / Symbols
Third Period:			
Purification / Illumination	Lent	*Intense spiritual preparation	*Do penance
		*Purify mind and heart	*Guide interior reflection more than instruct
Name for Candidates: the Elect			
Rites during third period			
a. Scrutinies	Third, Fourth, Fifth Sundays of Lent	*Inspire self-search	*Christ the living water
		*Uncover, heal the defective & sinful	*Christ the light of the world
		*Strengthen the good	*Christ the resurrection & life
b. Present Creed	Third Week of Lent	*Recall salvation history	*Hand over, instruct on heart of church's faith
c. Present Lord's Prayer	Fifth Week of Lent	*Fill with spirit of adoption	*Hand over, instruct on heart of church's prayer
d. Recite Creed	Holy Saturday	*Elect recite Creed	*Instruct on duty to proclaim Gospel
e. *Ephphatha*	Holy Saturday	*To hear & speak Word of God	*Touch ears and lips

Chart 1—Cont'd

The Rites and Structure of the RCIA

Period / Rite	Length / Date	Goal	Catechesis / Symbols
Third Step:			
Sacraments of initiation:	Easter Vigil	*Rebirth	*Vigil readings
		*Inaugurating life of baptized	*Renunciation of sin /devil
			*Profession of faith
**Baptism* **Confirmation* **Eucharist*			*Baptism: Triple immersion
			*Clothe with baptismal robe
			*Confirmation: Anointing, handlaying
			*First Eucharist
Fourth Period:			
Mystagogy	Easter to Pentecost	*Deepen grasp of paschal mystery	*Celebrate Eucharist
		*Experience welcome of faithful	*Mystagogical catechesis
			*Do works of charity

CHAPTER 1

The Fourth-Century Catechumenate

In the late fourth century the one whose conversion made headlines was not Augustine, but his friend Paulinus of Nola (ca. 352–431).[1] Born to spectacular wealth and vast lands in Spain, Aquitaine, and Italy, Paulinus was an aristocrat, a *vir clarissimus*. He served for a time as governor of the province of Campania and should have gone on to enjoy an illustrious political career among the senatorial elite of the Roman Empire. Suddenly, in 394, he renounced "the world"—career, rank, property. After ordination in Barcelona he retreated to Nola (not far from modern Naples), where he spent his days as its bishop. Paulinus was a gifted and erudite poet, one of the finest in the Christian world. He was also a man of letters—and letters in the most literal sense—for he carried on a far-flung correspondence with Christian notables around the empire. For over twenty-five years Augustine and Paulinus kept up a lively, intimate correspondence without ever meeting one another face to face.

Paulinus, like Augustine, was baptized in his thirties and came to savor and celebrate baptism's life-transforming powers. He was once enlisted by another friend of his, Sulpicius Severus, to compose poetry to be inscribed on the walls of a lavish new baptistery, words that the newly baptized might ponder just as they stepped

[1] On Paulinus's career see Dennis Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 208–40.

out from the font. Paulinus complied and sent Severus these verses:

> Here this fathering-forth soul-restoring font, imbued
> by divine light, stirs up living water.
> The Holy Spirit drops down from heaven into its currents
> and marries its sacred waters to heaven's fountain-flow.
> Its sea-swirl conceives God, and its nurturing waters
> birth forth a holy progeny by seed eternal.
> Awe-inspiring, this care of God. The sinner is flood-plunged,
> then emerges from these very same waters uprighted.
> So a person, in a good-fortuned going down and rising up,
> dies to things earthly, is born to things unceasing.
> Sin withers, life returns. The old Adam is buried
> and the new Adam is born to kingdoms eternal.[2]

These verses, aswirl with verbs of dying and rising, capture in a nutshell how ancient Christians viewed the life-altering passage of baptism. Paulinus's words would not have been carved into stone but rather inlaid as mosaic, the letters spelled out in glittering bright-colored tesserae. Mosaic was the great art form of Augustine's and Paulinus's day.[3]

In this chapter I assemble a mosaic of a different sort, a "mosaic" of the early catechumenate. First, I set out fragments from the third century to illustrate some of what Augustine inherited. Here I focus on two of his North African predecessors, Tertullian and Cyprian, whose care of catechumens and whose sometimes hard-

[2] Paulinus of Nola, *ep.* 32.5 (CSEL 29:279–80); author's translation. On this episode, see Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 209–10; Gäelle Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard, *Descriptions monumentales et discours sur l'édification chez Paulin de Nole: Le regard et la lumière (epist. 32 et carm. 27 et 28)* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[3] Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage*, Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology (Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1978); Aïcha Ben Abed, *Tunisian Mosaics: Treasures from Roman Africa* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2006).

line views on baptism proved uneasy inheritances, ones that Augustine at times felt it necessary to amend, even contradict. Then we will range about through an array of catechumenal texts from the fourth century, especially from the Greek East, to highlight broader patterns. These come from Augustine's contemporaries or near-contemporaries. Some illustrate points of commonality; others, points of contrast. With this mosaic as backdrop we will be in a better position to set Augustine's catechetical artistry in its proper frame.

THIRD-CENTURY INHERITANCES: NORTH AFRICA

The Platonist philosopher Celsus, a shrewd and caustic critic of the Christian movement, once quipped: "If all people wanted to be Christians, the Christians would no longer want them."[4] Celsus's remark, for all its irony, had more than a grain of truth in it. One detects a rigorist, sectarian strain running through many catechumenal and baptismal documents from the third century.[5]

Few illustrate such rigorist attitudes more pungently than Tertullian (ca. 170–215), a North African writer active in the church of Carthage and one of the pioneers of Latin theology.[6] His writings,

[4] Celsus, quoted by Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.9 (SC 136:28–30); trans. Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 133.

[5] On North African Christianity in this period see Maureen A. Tilley, "North Africa," 381–96 in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1: *Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); François Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, trans. Edward Smither (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009). For an overview of the liturgy in the period prior to Constantine, see Maxwell E. Johnson, "The Apostolic Tradition," 32–75 in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[6] Jerome, in *De viribus illustribus* 53, gives a thumbnail biography repeated in many modern accounts: that Tertullian's father was proconsular centurion; that Tertullian himself had been a presbyter of the Carthaginian church; that "because of the envy and reproaches of the clerics of the Roman church, he had lapsed into Montanism" (trans. Thomas P. Halton, *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, FOTC 100:74). Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary*

especially *On Baptism* (*De baptismo*), the earliest surviving treatise on the sacrament, offer glimpses of the third-century catechumenate and the North African rite of baptism.[7] They also display his passionate concern for catechumens, whom he defined as "recruits who have just recently begun to give ear to the flow of divine discourse and who, like puppies newly born, creep about uncertainly, with eyes as yet unopened."[8]

Tertullian makes no mention of a rite of entry into the catechumenate or of the catechumenate's exact length or possible stages. But he sets out in high relief what Timothy Barnes has called "the dominant motif of African Christianity: uncompromising rejection of an alien world."[9] This is evident in *On the Shows* (*De spectaculis*), a work Tertullian addressed to catechumens and neophytes. He warned that they inhabit a demon-possessed world: "There is no place—whether streets or marketplace or baths or taverns or even our own homes—that is completely free of idols: Satan and his angels have filled the whole world."[10] Tertullian sought to convince readers to shun four locales and the popular entertainments they offered: horse races in the circus; gladiatorial combats and wild-animal hunts in the amphitheater; athletic competitions in the stadium; bawdy plays in the theater. The linchpin of his argument was that these were "pomps of the devil" and thus contrary to baptismal vows:

Study, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3–59, dismantles each of those claims and offers a reconstruction of Tertullian's thought and career on the basis of his surviving works. See also David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[7] For the text, with commentary, see Ernest Evans, ed., *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism* (London: SPCK, 1964); R. F. Refoulé and Maurice Drouzy, eds., *Tertullien: Traité du baptême*, rev. ed., SC 35 (Paris: Cerf, 2002). For a translation see Lawrence J. Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church*, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 119–32 (hereafter abbreviated "*WEC*").

[8] Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6.1 (CCL 1:329); trans. William LeSaint, *Tertullian: Treatises on Penance*, ACW 28:24.

[9] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 62.

[10] Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 8.9 (CCL 1:235); trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, *Tertullian: Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*, FOTC 40:69. He mentions catechumens and neophytes in 1.1 (CCL 1:227).

> I shall now appeal to the prime and principal authority of our seal itself. When we step into the water and profess the Christian faith in the terms prescribed by its law, we bear public witness that we have renounced the devil and his pomps and his angels. . . . So, if it be proved true that the whole apparatus of these shows originates from idolatry, we will have reached a decision in advance that our profession of faith in baptism refers also to these entertainments, since they belong to the devil and his pomps and his angels because of the idolatry involved.[11]

For Tertullian, renouncing Satan during the rite of baptism had wide implications for Christian living. In *The Crowns*, he used this same argument to condemn Christian soldiers who joined pagan confrères in wearing victory crowns and swearing oaths of allegiance.[12] In *The Apparel of Women*, he appealed to it to denounce women who used rouge or dyed their hair or wore gold jewelry or fashionable seashells.[13] But his most far-reaching appeal appears in *On Idolatry*.[14] Here he sets out a long list of professions forbidden to Christians, arguing that, because of baptismal vows, craftsmen could not sculpt or paint pagan figures; weavers, bronze workers, silversmiths, stonemasons, building contractors, and engravers could not work on temples, altars, or shrines, barring them from the most lucrative construction projects of the day. Nor could Christians be teachers. The school curriculum required teaching books that glorified pagan gods, and the school calendar revolved around pagan feasts. Nor could they serve in politics since as magistrates they would be required, either in person or by delegation, to

[11] Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 4.1 (CCL 1:231); trans. Arbesmann, FOTC 40: 56 (modified). On this theme, see Jan H. Waszink, "Pompa diaboli," *Vigiliae Christianae* 1 (1947): 13–41.

[12] Tertullian, *De corona* 13.7 (CCL 2:1062).

[13] Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* 1.2.4 (CCL 1:345); also 2.5.1-3.

[14] For this work, see Jan H. Waszink and J. C. M. Van Winden, *Tertullian: De idololatria: Critical Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1987). Barnes, *Tertullian*, 100, argues that "Tertullian is writing for recent converts," though the work does not explicitly reference either catechumens or neophytes.

help with sacrifices, raise taxes for maintenance of pagan temples, sponsor gladiatorial games, and order the torture and execution of criminals.[15] Christian businessmen were scrupulously to avoid oaths—more or less impossible since business contracts contained an oath to the gods.[16] This advice, if followed, meant Christians had to make a profound break from their everyday world. Not surprisingly, many complained: "I have nothing else to live by."[17] Tertullian was unsympathetic. Baptismal renunciation formed the bedrock of Christian morals—at least, his interpretation of them—and its exigencies had to be followed no matter the cost.

Once, in a rapid summary, Tertullian listed ascetical exercises expected of catechumens on the eve of their baptism: "Those preparing for baptism should invoke God through fervent prayers, fasting, genuflections, and vigils"; they also "prepare themselves by confessing all their past sins," though such confession was not done "publicly."[18] This summary gives no outline of catechetical training, but we possess two catecheses that Tertullian directed to catechumens: *On Penitence* and *On Baptism*. He and others seem to have spoken to catechumens at community meals and other gatherings.[19] In *On Penitence*, he complained about two pastoral problems Augustine later wrestled with: catechumens who delayed baptism because they feared the rigors of public penance should they commit sin on the far side of baptism; and catechumens who

[15] Tertullian, *De idololatria* 3-17 (Waszink, *Tertullian*, 26–57).

[16] Tertullian, *De idololatria* 23 (Waszink, *Tertullian*, 66–68). Waszink and van Winden, *Tertullian: De idololatria*, 285, note: "In business contracts of the day, there were oaths to pagan gods. While a Christian only had to sign the document, they—in Tertullian's view—made the words of the document their own."

[17] Quoted by Tertullian, *De idololatria* 5 (Waszink, *Tertullian*, 28–29).

[18] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 20 (SC 35:94); trans. *WEC* 1:131.

[19] Barnes, *Tertullian*, 117, notes that in *Apologeticum* 39 (CCL 1:152–53) Tertullian mentions that at or after their common meal Christians were invited to read from Scripture or to speak. Barnes concludes that these and several other works (e.g., *De oratione*, *De patientia*) may have been delivered in these circumstances. These works retain marks of an oral address but also have a literary polish that indicates they were reworked before publication.

felt justified in maintaining a lower moral standard that they might "steal the intervening time and make of it an interlude for sinning rather than for learning not to sin."[20] Tertullian denounced both types and encouraged catechumens in his audience to strive for rigor of life: "We are not baptized so that we may cease committing sin but because we have ceased, we are already clean of heart. This, surely, is the first baptism of the catechumen."[21] While Tertullian had deep respect for baptism's powers, he did not regard the rite as magical. The water bath ratified what the catechumenate's discipline had wrought. As he famously put it, "Christians are made not born (*fiunt non nascantur Christiani*)."[22] And the catechumenate was precisely where Christians were made.

His other catechesis, *On Baptism*, has the earmarks of a final address directed to those soon to be baptized.[23] He opens with an intriguing claim: "As little fish who take our name from Jesus Christ, the great Fish (*ichthus*), we are born in water, and it is only by remaining in the water that we are saved."[24] He then took up an issue that Augustine's teacher, Ambrose, would also discuss: candidates disappointed by the "simplicity" of the Christian mysteries. Pagan shrines in that era used elaborate apparatus to create the impression of miraculous events: reflecting pools that caused strange light effects; fireworks to suggest a god's departure;

[20] Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6.9 (CCL 1:330); trans. LeSaint, ACW 28:24.

[21] Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6.17 (CCL 1:331); trans. LeSaint, ACW 28:26.

[22] Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 18.4 (CCL 1:118), trans. Robert D. Sider, *Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 38. Tertullian uses the similar expression "making Christians" in *De baptismo* 18. The aphorism echoes Seneca: "One is not born wise, but becomes wise" (*On Anger* 2.10.6).

[23] For an overview of Tertullian's theology of baptism and the rite as he describes it, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Manumission and Baptism in Tertullian's Africa: A Search for the Origin of Confirmation," *Studia Liturgica* 31 (2001): 129–49; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 336–50. Tertullian, *De baptismo* 20 (SC 35:96) closes with appeal for prayer similar to John Chrysostom's final instructions to candidates before their baptism (see *Baptismal Instruction* 11.30-31).

[24] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 1 (SC 35:65); trans. *WEC* 1:119 (modified).

mirrors that allowed initiates to see the god through a glass darkly; underground channels and piping that converted a stream of water into one of wine; doors equipped with spring mechanisms so that they appeared to open miraculously; statues that seemed to speak in an eerie, distant voice.[25] Christian rites had no such special effects. It is little wonder candidates might feel disappointed. Tertullian tried to head off the reaction: "Nothing so assails the human mind as the contrast between the apparent simplicity of divine work and the greatness of the effects promised. This is true. Everything happens with the greatest simplicity, without splendor, without extraordinary preparation. In short, without any cost a person goes down into the water and is washed while certain words are said. The person emerges from the water not much or not at all cleaner. This is why some do not believe that eternity is gained in this way."[26]

Tertullian then embarked on a long panegyric on the high dignity of water. First, he surveyed its role in the Old Testament: the waters at creation that brought forth the first living creatures and became "the abode of the divine Spirit who preferred it to other elements"; the waters of the flood that was "the baptism of this world," while the dove of Noah "which is the Holy Spirit, flies towards the earth, that is, toward our body which comes out of the bath washed of its former sins"; the waters of the Red Sea signifying that "pagans are released from the world by means of water; they leave behind the devil, their old tyrant, crushed down under the water"; the figure of Moses sweetening a desert spring by throwing in a piece of wood ("this wood was Christ himself").[27] In lapidary fashion he then insisted, "where Christ is, there is water," and followed with a compendium of water episodes from the gospels:

> Christ was baptized in water. And when he was invited to the wedding feast, water initiated the beginning of his power. Announcing

[25] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 135–36.
[26] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 2 (SC 35:65–66); trans. *WEC* 1:119.
[27] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 3-9 (SC 35:67–79); trans. *WEC* 1:120–24.

> the word, he invites those who are thirsty to drink of his eternal water. Speaking of love, he declares that the cup of water given to one's neighbor is an act of love. It is next to a well that Christ regains his strength. He walks on water, taking delight in crossing over it; with water he washes the feet of his disciples. Witnesses in regard to baptism continue on to the Passion: . . . water flows forth when Christ's side is pierced by the soldier's lance.[28]

Tertullian's comments here presuppose a high level of biblical literacy among his catechumens. Why else would he have felt at ease in using such rapid-fire and often oblique allusions?

Tertullian is the earliest writer to recommend Easter as the privileged day for celebrating baptism, arguing for its "greater solemnity . . . since the passion of the Lord into which we are baptized was accomplished" then.[29] This linking of Christ's passion with baptism echoes Paul's comments in Romans 6. In the fourth century this Pauline theology of baptism—that Christians are baptized into the death of Christ—would become the paradigm. But it was not that in the third century. In the Syriac East at this time the prime gospel archetype was not Jesus' passion but his baptism, and that archetype gave rise to a quite different interpretation of baptism: that the Holy Spirit anointed Christians into the prophetic power of the Messiah.[30] Tertullian's advocacy of Easter foreshadowed another trend. In the centuries to come, Easter became the favored day for the celebration of baptism in the Latin West. But elsewhere other days, such as Epiphany (which became associated with Jesus' baptism), would be no less significant. Tertullian himself acknowledged other suitable days. He spoke of Pentecost as a "propitious time for celebrating baptism," noting that "during these days the Risen Lord frequently showed himself to his disciples" and that "this was when the grace of the Holy Spirit was given to them and which allowed them to hope in the Lord's

[28] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 9 (SC 35:79); trans. *WEC* 1:124.

[29] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 19 (SC 35:93); author's translation.

[30] See Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan: The Trinitarian and Cosmic Order of Salvation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996).

coming." He then added: "Every day belongs to the Lord. Every hour, every time is suitable for baptism. Even though the ceremony might be different, grace is in no way affected."[31]

In *On Baptism* (and elsewhere) Tertullian offers intriguing, if passing, comments on the North African rites of initiation. His remarks are not like accounts found in church orders of the era (e.g., *Didascalia*) or later mystagogical catecheses that permit scholars to reconstruct a step-by-step sequence of ancient rites. But his comments are precious because they are among our earliest glimpses into the rite. First, he says that there was a public renunciation of Satan: that at some point prior to baptism candidates "declare in the assembly, under the bishop's imposed hand, that [they] renounce the devil, his pomps, and his angels."[32] Second, he gives the earliest mention of a blessing-prayer prayed over the baptismal waters: "The Spirit comes from heaven, hovers over the waters which it sanctifies with its presence, and the waters, thus sanctified, are in turn granted the power to sanctify."[33] Third, he says that the words that accompanied baptismal immersion were "interrogations somewhat lengthier than the Lord prescribed in the Gospel."[34] We today use an indicative formula ("I baptize you . . .") and draw on the words of the risen Jesus from the end of

[31] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 19 (SC 35:93–94); trans. *WEC* 1:131. On this see Paul F. Bradshaw, "'*Diem baptismo sollemniorum*': Initiation and Easter in Christian Antiquity," 41–51 in *ΕΥΑΟΓΗΜΑ: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S.J.*, Studia Anselmiana 110 (Rome: 1993), 41–51, repr. in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 137–47; Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Origins of Feasts, Fasts and Seasons in Early Christianity* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 75–86.

[32] Tertullian, *De corona* 3.2 (CCL 2:1042): "*aliquanto prius in ecclesia sub antistitis manu*." *Antistitis* ("presider") ordinarily refers to the bishop. Stewart-Sykes, "Manumission," 132–33, argues for reading the passage literally ("under the hand") rather than more figuratively ("under the control"), noting that the bishop has his hand on the candidate, in a gesture of exorcism that parallels and complements the later episcopal Spirit-invoking hand-laying after baptism. There also seems to have been a second renunciation "when entering the water" (*De spectaculis* 4); see the discussion in Stewart-Sykes, "Manumission," 130–31; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 340.

[33] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 4 (SC 35:69); trans. *WEC* 1:121.

[34] Tertullian, *De corona* 3.3 (CCL 2:1042); author's translation.

Matthew's gospel, and those words accompany a triple dunking or pouring. In the later North African rite and elsewhere in the Latin West the words that accompanied immersion were not a single indicative sentence but a triple interrogation: "Do you believe in God the Father . . . ? in Jesus Christ . . . ? in the Holy Spirit . . . ?" and each question included added phrases from the local creed. So when Tertullian speaks here of "interrogations somewhat lengthier" than Jesus' words, that seems to be what he means. Fourth, Tertullian gives the earliest mention we have that baptism involved a *triple* immersion: "Christ commanded that his disciples baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit . . . and so it is with us that we are immersed not just once but three times, once at each individual name into each individual person" of the Trinity.[35] And it was, indeed, an immersion, not just a sprinkling. Tertullian regularly used the verb *baptizare* ("to baptize"), a Greek word transliterated into Latin; he also used descriptive Latin verbs more familiar to his listeners: *tingere* ("to dip, to dye") and *mergere* ("to immerse, to plunge"). For Tertullian baptism was a *lavacrum*, "a bath." It involved the whole body.[36]

After the triple immersion, other rites followed. First, a person was "thoroughly anointed with blessed oil in conformity with ancient practice whereby a person was customarily raised to the priesthood by being anointed with oil from a horn. . . . The name 'Christ' has its origin here."[37] Later, Western theology would

[35] Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 26 (CCL 2:1198); author's translation.

[36] Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 341.

[37] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 7 (SC 35:76); trans. *WEC* 1:123. By contrast, in third-century Syria an anointing with chrism occurred *before* not *after* baptism and was interpreted as an incorporation into Christ's messianic and prophetic life. On this see Gabriele Winkler, "The Original Meaning of the Prebaptismal Anointing and Its Implications," *Worship* 52 (1978): 24–45, repr. in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 58–81, and summarized in Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 146–55, and Johnson, *Rites of Initiation*, 55–63. This *single* anointing differs from later Roman practice, which had a *double* anointing, the first by the presbyters, the second by the bishop, which was interpreted as the gift of the Spirit. In Tertullian (and later Cyprian) the gift of the Spirit is associated with the imposition of hands.

interpret such an anointing as the gift of the Holy Spirit, but Tertullian interpreted this chrismation in terms of its priestly and Christic implications. Second, Tertullian says that "hands were laid upon us with a blessing invoked, inviting the Holy Spirit to come."[38] His comments on these postbaptismal rites of anointing and hand laying are the earliest Western mention of a rite that, centuries later, followed a separatist course, breaking off to become the independent sacrament of confirmation.[39] But as Tertullian indicates here, these rites were integral to baptism; they were all of a piece. Finally, he says that Eucharist followed immediately: "Having stepped forth from the font, we are given a taste of a mixture of milk and honey, and from that day for a whole week, we forego our daily bath. We also receive the sacrament of the Eucharist which the Lord entrusted to all at the hour for supper, at our early morning meetings, and then from the hand of none but the bishops."[40] First Communion in Tertullian's North Africa was thus an unusual one: the communicant partook not only of bread and wine, but before that was given a taste of honeyed milk. The newly baptized had entered a Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Tertullian closed his address to the soon-to-be-baptized catechumens with a dramatic final exhortation:

> Therefore, blessed ones, God's grace awaits you. You will ascend from the most holy bath of new birth. For the first time you will extend your hands with your brethren in the house of your mother.

[38] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 8 (SC 35:76); trans. *WEC* 1:123. Cf. Cyprian, *ep.* 73.9, who also interprets the imposition of hands as the gesture by which newly baptized "receive the Holy Spirit and are made perfect with the Lord's seal."

[39] These gestures, set against evidence of Syrian practice of a single chrismation prior to the water bath, have been much discussed in liturgical scholarship with regard to later Western practices of and interpretations of confirmation. See Gabriele Winkler, "Confirmation or Chrismation? A Study in Comparative Liturgy," *Worship* 58 (1984): 2–17; Frank C. Quinn, "Confirmation Reconsidered: Rite and Meaning," *Worship* 59 (1985): 345–70; both reprinted in *Living Water, Sealing Spirit*, 202–18 and 219–37.

[40] Tertullian, *De corona* 3.2 (CCL 2:1042); trans. Sider, 123.

> You will ask the Father, ask the Lord for the abundance of his charisms as a special gift of divine grace. Ask and you will receive, he says. You have asked, and you have found. You have knocked, and it has been opened to you. I request only one more thing: that you remember in your prayers Tertullian the sinner.[41]

Tertullian's plea presumes what became a stock North African belief: that the newly baptized stepped out from the font charged with supernatural powers of healing and of intercession. In the dazzling purity of their sudden sinlessness their prayers would enjoy a hearing and answer from God in a way that few others enjoyed. Tertullian does not say exactly what words those newly baptized prayed, but if the later North African rite is any indication, the words were likely those of the Lord's Prayer.[42]

The world of Tertullian was one in which Christians still risked persecution, imprisonment, even execution. A catechumen, if martyred before baptism, received, he argued, a baptism of blood "that paid off every debt of sin."[43] Fifty years later the risks of martyrdom were, if anything, heightened. In 248, Cyprian of Carthage was elected bishop and almost immediately was called on to guide his church through one of the most brutal and systematic

[41] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 20 (SC 35:96); trans. *WEC* 1:132.

[42] On this see William Harmless, "'. . . receive today how you are to call upon God' (*s.* 58.1): The Lord's Prayer and Augustine's Mystagogy," in *Seeing Through the Eyes of Faith: The Mystagogy of the Church Fathers*, ed. Paul van Geest (Louvain: Peeters, 2014). We will examine this in chapter 6 in regard to the *traditio orationis* and again in chapter 7 in the reconstruction of the baptismal rite in Hippo. The earliest surviving treatises on the Lord's Prayer are those by Tertullian and Cyprian; neither makes explicit reference to a prebaptismal handing over of the Lord's Prayer or a baptismal usage. But it is possible that these treatises first originated as catecheses for catechumens; that, at least, is the judgment of Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen: On the Lord's Prayer* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 22–24. Augustine knew and drew on these treatises for his catecheses of *competentes*.

[43] Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50.15 (CCL 1:171); author's translation. In *Scorpiace* 6.11 (CCL 2:1081) he speaks of martyrdom as a "second new birth" (trans. Dunn, *Tertullian*, ECF, 118).

persecutions early Christians ever faced, that of the emperor Decius.[44] Cyprian himself would be martyred in 258, and by Augustine's time he was celebrated as one of the heroes of the North African church. Cyprian's writings offer glimpses of the third-century catechumenate, but more important, his views on baptism would lay the groundwork for all later North African baptismal theologies, including Augustine's.

Cyprian, like Augustine, had been a mid-life convert. In *To Donatus* (*Ad Donatum*) he looked back on his former high-society lifestyle in dark terms:

> I lay sprawled in the shadows of a lightless night, tossed about on high seas, indecisive, wandering about, ignorant of my life, estranged from truth and light. I used to reflect on my lifestyle and wondered how anyone could be born again and inspired to a new life simply through taking a bath in flowing water. . . . "How," I used to say, "is such conversion possible?" My reflections penetrated deeply, down to my soul's very roots.[45]

He reflected on the exquisite pleasures of one who savored an upper-class Roman life. How, he asked himself, could one who grew up enjoying the finest gourmet foods and high-society dinners get used to eating simple basics? How could one who had worn the latest fashions in gold and imperial purple get used to commonplace garb? How could one who had grown accustomed to high political office return to the unacclaimed anonymity of ordinary citizenship? How could one who had been surrounded by a large entourage of clients get used to solitude? "All these applied to me," he noted, adding: "I was ensnarled in so many errors of my old way of life that I couldn't believe I could ever get rid of them." Around 246 he experienced a conversion and sought baptism; then

[44] On Cyprian's career and theology, see especially J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[45] Cyprian, *Ad Donatum* 3 (SC 291:80–82); author's translation.

> With the help of life-restoring waters that washed me clean of the stains of my old way of life, a light poured down from on high upon my purged and purified heart, and I drank in the Spirit that came down from heaven, and I tasted a second birth that restored me to a new humanity, and I marveled that what I had once doubted became clear, what was once hidden came open, what was once in shadows came to light so that it became possible to live and do what I had thought impossible. . . . The Holy Spirit was now giving me life.[46]

Just two years later Cyprian was elected Carthage's bishop. No doubt his political experience, leadership skills, and elite social contacts made him an attractive candidate. These proved critical in guiding the Carthaginian community when the Decian persecution erupted so violently. We only get brief glimpses of Cyprian's catechumenate, much as we get only brief glimpses of the rest of his church, most often in passing allusions to persons and events within letters occasioned by the often anguishing emergencies and bitter conflicts during and after the persecution of Decius. In these letters Cyprian speaks here and there of "*catecumini*" (which transliterates the Greek term) or "*audientes*" ("hearers," which translates the term into Latin).[47] Cyprian speaks of appointing "teachers" (*doctores*) and "readers" (*lectores*) charged with teaching catechumens.[48]

What did they teach? An early treatise, *To Quirinus* (*Ad Quirinum*), gives us a good sense of what Cyprian thought urgent to teach beginners. It spells out not only the sort of content taught to

[46] Cyprian, *Ad Donatum* 4 (SC 291:82–84); author's translation.

[47] Cyprian, in *ep.* 73.22.2 (CCL 3C:556–57) and *Ad Quirinum* 3.98 (CCL 3:78), uses *catecumenus*, while in *ep.* 18.2.2 (CCL 3B:101–2) and *ep.* 29.2 (CCL 3B:138) he uses *audientes.* A Roman letter to Cyprian uses *caticuminus* (*ep.* 8.3.1, CCL 3B:42). On Cyprian's catechumenate see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Catechumenate and Contra-Culture: The Social Process of Catechumenate in Third-Century Africa and Its Development," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 47 (2003): 289–306; Andy Alexis-Baker, "*Ad Quirinum* Book Three and Cyprian's Catechumenate," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009): 357–80.

[48] Cyprian, *ep.* 29.2 (CCL 3B:138), speaks of "readers for the teachers of catechumens (*lectores doctorum audientum*)"; *ep.* 73.3.2 (CCL 3C:532–33) also refers to "teachers" (*doctori*) for catechumens.

catechumens but also a method used to teach them.[49] This work is of interest since Augustine knew it well and commented on it on several occasions.[50] Cyprian speaks of it as "a compendium" of Scripture meant to "form the first lineaments of your faith" so that "being led away from the darkness of error and enlightened by God's pure and shining light, we may keep to this way of life through the saving sacraments."[51] The treatise is divided into three "books." Each contains "testimonies," that is, an anthology of biblical verses arranged under a heading.[52] Book 1 has twenty-four headings and portrays (in harsh terms) the Christian church as a replacement of ancient Israel;[53] book 2 has thirty headings that define the identity and meaning of Jesus; book 3 has one hundred twenty headings that contain an array of moral precepts and admonitions. Much of this may not be Cyprian's own but rather represents an older compilation that Cyprian himself learned from, drew on, and recommended to others.[54]

[49] On the *Ad Quirinum* see Ferguson, "Catechesis and Initiation," 239–42; see also Antonio Quacquarelli, "Note retoriche sui *Testimonia* di Cipriano," *Vetera Christianorum* 8 (1971): 181–209; Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 29–32; Alexis-Baker, "*Ad Quirinum* Book Three and Cyprian's Catechumenate." Kreider and Alexis-Baker read the work solely as a catechumenal document, while Ferguson, "Catechesis and Initiation," 242, rightly notes that "Cyprian's collection of scriptural *testimonia* may have served other purposes than catechesis." Charles Bobertz, "An Analysis of *Vita Cypriani* 3.6-10 and the Attribution of *Ad Quirinum* to Cyprian of Carthage," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 112–28, at 127n35, points out that Cyprian himself mined it "as a source of citations in all of [his] treatises except *Ad Donatum*."

[50] *c. ep. Pel.* 4.21, 4.25, 4.27 (CSEL 60:543, 552, 556); *corrept.* 7.12 (PL 44:923).

[51] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* praef. (CCL 3:3); trans. Robert E. Wallis, ANF 5:507.

[52] Thus the work's other common title: *Testimonia*. See R. Weber, "Introduction," *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*, CCL 3, liii–lv.

[53] On this anti-Jewish polemic in North Africa see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), esp. 231–32; she traces the ugly legacy of the anti-Jewish "talking points" of book 1 of Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum* and notes their use by Augustine's Manichean opponent Faustus of Milevis.

[54] While the manuscript tradition and a wide consensus of scholars see Cyprian as the author, Bobertz has noted that the heading of 3.28 ("that for-

The headings of book 2 illustrate its Christ-centered curriculum: "That Christ is the first-born and himself the wisdom of God through whom all things were made" (2.1); "That Christ also is the Word of God" (2.3); "That Christ is God" (2.6); "That Christ as God should come as the illuminator and savior of humankind" (2.7); "That Christ is both God and human joined from out of both so that he may be the mediator between us and the Father" (2.10); "That in the passion and sign of the cross is all virtue and power" (2.21); "That he should rise again from the underworld on the third day" (2.24); "That he himself will come as a judge" (2.28); "That he himself will reign as a king forever" (2.29).[55] These headings are more than chapter titles. They mark signposts that map how Cyprian's community understood the identity of Jesus. They also provided catechumens with lenses for reading the gospels. They of course resemble (and expand on) essentials from the creed (or "rule of faith," as it was called in Cyprian's time). No less important was that these headings were made to be memorized. And that precisely was Cyprian's intention: "that a few things digested into a short space are both quickly read through and are frequently repeated."[56] They were thus memory aids. Cyprian also intended them as springboards for fuller exposition by teachers.[57]

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giveness cannot be granted in the Church by one who has sinned against God") contradicts Cyprian's teaching from the earliest phase of the Decian persecution. One possibility is that Cyprian changed his mind in the wake of the persecution; Bobertz, however, concludes that the work, while known to and used by Cyprian and by his biographer Pontius, predates Cyprian himself, that "the rigorist notion of church discipline reflected in *Ad Quirinum* . . . was a vestige of the past." I am inclined to agree in part that the substance of the work represents an older collection that Cyprian himself drew upon, but he appears to have authored the prefaces and commended their contents to Quirinus. Some admonitions echo an earlier era; 3.28 was made obsolete by Cyprian's policies.

[55] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 2 capit. 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 21, 24, 26, 28, 29 (CCL 3:27–28); author's translation.

[56] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 praef. (CCL 3:73); trans. Wallis, ANF 5: 528.

[57] Cyprian makes this very point in another collection of *testimonia*: *Ad Fortunatum* praef. 3 (CCL 3:184), "a compendium" that "establishes by what I had proposed as the authority of divine teaching in such a way that I might not

In the preface to book 3, Cyprian speaks of the headings as "pertaining to the religious teaching of our school."[58] These were "precepts" or moral dicta drawn from across the New Testament: that one practice love of neighbor (3.3); that one be humble (3.5); that one not swear (3.12) or curse (3.13); that one not judge others rashly (3.21); that one forgive wrongs done (3.22); that one never return evil for evil (3.23); that one visit the sick (3.109) and protect widows and orphans (3.113).[59] In anticipation of life's inevitable tragedies, Cyprian insists that God's providence is deeply mysterious, that one must not murmur against God (3.14) but treat tragedies and injustices as God's purposeful testing (3.15). Many headings concern economics. The opening one, "On the benefit of good works and mercy," gathers many pages of biblical texts on care of the poor, beginning with a text Augustine would regularly cite: "Share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless into your dwelling; if you see someone naked, clothe him" (Isa 58:7).[60] Other headings stress that laborers be paid promptly (3.81), that one not give loans at interest (3.48) or lust for money (3.61). These moral dicta were not simply headings to be memorized; they were lessons to be lived. One also finds echoes of Tertullian's dark worldview: "That there is a strong conflict to be waged against the devil, and that therefore we ought to stand bravely, that we may be able to conquer" (3.117).[61] Another heading encapsulates a core North African conviction: "That unless a person has been baptized and born again, he or she cannot attain the kingdom of God" (3.25).[62] Other admonitions refer to the catechumenate's goal: "That

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appear to have sent you my own treatise so much, as to have suggested material for others to discourse on."

[58] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 praef. (CCL 3:73); author's translation.

[59] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3 capit. (CCL 3:73–80). Deogratias, a deacon from Carthage, wrote Augustine around 403 and echoed this language in the way he speaks of teaching newcomers "the precepts." See the discussion of this in chapter 3.

[60] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.1 (CCL 3:80–88).

[61] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.117 (CCL 3:177); trans. Robert E. Wallis, ANF 5:556.

[62] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.25 (CCL 3:121); author's translation. This cites John 3:5-6 and 6:53 as proof texts.

the catechumen ought to sin no more" (3.98); "That we must hurry to faith and the attainment" (3.97)—"attainment" (*consecutio*) being a traditional code word for "baptism."[63]

Cyprian's legacy to Augustine—and to Western Christianity—was a cluster of theological ideas forged in the midst of and in the aftermath of the brutal, bloody Decian persecution. In the winter of 249 an imperial decree went out that all must pronounce a loyalty oath before an imperial commission, testifying that one has always been a worshiper of the gods who protected the empire, offering a libation and a few grains of incense and taking a taste of sacrificed meat. For Christians such an act was both idolatry and apostasy. Cyprian spoke of it in the darkest terms, as participating in demonic worship: "Could a servant of God stand there and speak and renounce Christ, whereas it was the world and the devil he had renounced before [at baptism]? . . . When he saw that altar of the devil, smoking and reeking with its foul stench, should he not have fled in terror?" Huge numbers of Christians lapsed. Cyprian complained that in Carthage "some did not even wait to be arrested before going up" to sacrifice; "they did not wait to be questioned before they denied their faith. Many were defeated before the battle was joined."[64] Some sought ways around sacrificing. Wealthy Christians bribed officials for certificates (*libelli*) that testified to their having sacrificed even though they had not done so; others sent their slaves to do so in their name, again avoiding actually sacrificing. In a letter to his presbyters Cyprian wrote: "We must face the fact and acknowledge that the raging devastation of this persecution . . . has ravaged the major part of our flock."[65] Both during and after the persecution many who had sacrificed (*sacrificati*) or bought certificates (*libellatici*) sought forgiveness. In North Africa there had been a longstanding tradition of a one-time

[63] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum* 3.98, 97 (CCL 3:170, 169); author's translation.

[64] Cyprian, *De lapsis* 8 (Maurice Bévenot, ed., *De lapsis and De ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, OECT [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], 12); trans. Bévenot, *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed*, ACW 25:19.

[65] Cyprian, *ep.* 11.1.2 (CCL 3B:56–57); trans. G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of Cyprian of Carthage*, ACW 43:76.

forgiveness of major sins after baptism, requiring a lengthy public penance. But in this case, at least to the hard-liners, such apostasy seemed an unforgivable sin. Within months after the persecution's end in 251, Cyprian gathered bishops from around North Africa to meet in council and forged consensus around a core principle: bishops—and bishops alone—had the right to offer forgiveness even for such catastrophic sins as apostasy. They also hammered out legislation defining varying degrees of apostasy and spelling out requirements for readmitting people into communion. In reaction, hard-line splinter groups broke off, denying any forgiveness on the far side of baptism.

Out of this experience Cyprian, slowly and in careful conjunction with his fellow bishops, worked out a consensus on fundamental principles that shaped the North African theology of the church and of baptism. Central to being church was its unity; to break the unity of the church was unchristian. As Cyprian put it: "If a person does not hold fast to this oneness of the Church, does he imagine that he still holds the faith?"[66] He cited the letter to the Ephesians as his defining text: there is "one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God" (Eph 4:4-6). The unity of the church was symbolized by the unity of the bishops, whom he understood as successors to the apostles. Thus hard-liners who broke with either Cyprian or his episcopal colleagues were no longer members of the church. Second, he famously insisted: "There is no salvation outside the Church (*salus extra ecclesiam non est*)."[67] He also famously compared the church to Noah's ark and asked rhetorically: "If there was escape for anyone who was outside the ark of Noah, then there is escape too for one who is found outside the Church."[68] This had consequences for anyone who joined assemblies led by the hard-liners as well as any baptized by them. Cyprian insisted: "You cannot have God for your Father if you do not have the Church for your mother."[69] This, another of Cyprian's

[66] Cyprian, *De unitate* 4 (OECT, 64); trans. Bénevot, ACW 25:47.
[67] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.21.2 (CCL 3C:555); trans. Clarke, ACW 47:66.
[68] Cyprian, *De unitate* 6 (OECT, 66); trans. Bénevot, ACW 25:49.
[69] Cyprian, *De unitate* 6 (OECT, 66); trans. Bénevot, ACW 25:48–49.

famous aphorisms, meant that if one had been baptized by someone other than the bishop or his delegated representative one was neither a member of the church nor could one be saved. The logic of such views could be taken to imply that catechumens who died as martyrs died unsaved, but Cyprian upheld the traditional view that catechumens received a baptism of blood:

> Such catechumens do hold the faith and truth of the Church complete; they march forth from the camp of God to do battle with the devil possessed of a full and sincere knowledge of God the Father and of Christ and the Holy Spirit; . . . they are not in fact deprived of the sacrament of baptism inasmuch as they are baptized with the greatest and most glorious baptism of all, that of blood. It was of this that the Lord Himself said that . . . those baptized in their own blood and sanctified with a martyr's suffering are made perfect and obtain the grace which God has promised.[70]

In the aftermath of the persecution the question arose about how to deal with people who had been baptized within one of the splinter groups, or "schismatics," and who now wanted to join the catholic, or "worldwide," church. In Rome its newly elected bishop Stephen treated those baptized by schismatics as penitents; after due penance, hands were laid on them, and they were welcomed into communion.[71] Cyprian and his North African colleagues sharply disagreed. Such a person had been washed in a ceremony outside the church; such a baptism was no baptism at all, and any hand laying that followed it would have conveyed no gift of the Spirit. As Cyprian put it, "Can a man give what he doesn't have? How can a man who has himself lost the Holy Spirit perform actions of the Spirit? That is why those who come uninitiated to

[70] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.22.2 (CCL 3C:556–57); trans. Clarke, ACW 47:67.

[71] On this controversy see J. Patout Burns, "Social Context in the Controversy between Cyprian and Stephen," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1991): 38–44; idem, "On Rebaptism: Social Organization in the Third Century Church," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 367–403; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Heresy and Schism according to Cyprian of Carthage," *Journal of Theological Studies* 55 (2004): 551–76.

the Church are to be baptized and renewed."[72] When schismatics came to Cyprian they therefore received both baptism and a Spirit-invoking hand laying. To Stephen in Rome that policy looked as though Cyprian and the North Africans were endorsing *re*-baptism. Cyprian replied sharply, speaking in the name of bishops who had gathered at a large North African council: "We ruled that there is but one baptism and that is established within the catholic Church; by this baptism we do not *rebaptize* but rather *baptize* all those who, coming as they do from spurious and unhallowed waters, need to be washed clean and sanctified in the genuine waters of salvation."[73] There were sharp exchanges in the letters that passed between Cyprian and Stephen, and Stephen may have broken off communion. Cyprian himself was soon after arrested and martyred in 258. His death would seal his heroic reputation, and his views would come to define North African policy. These views were ones Augustine would inherit and, in certain ways, amend, even reverse, but only with the greatest of care and difficulty.

The third-century catechumenate should neither be romanticized nor underestimated.[74] On the one hand its selectivity and rigor produced a spate of martyrs. On the other hand, for all its sectarian rigors and discipline it did not guarantee uniformly high standards or stalwart congregations. The clearest evidence is the widespread lapses that Cyprian spent his tenure coping with. On a more mundane, day-to-day level, there were always those less-than-zealous Christians who, according to Cyprian's contemporary Origen, came to church erratically, disturbed liturgies with noisy chit-chat, and spent their best energies not on faith but on making money.[75]

[72] Cyprian, *ep.* 70.2.3 (CCL 3C:509); trans. Clarke, ACW 47:47.

[73] Cyprian, *ep.* 73.1.2 (CCL 3C:530); trans. Clarke, ACW 47:54.

[74] E.g., Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries* (New York: Sadlier, 1979), 30, who claims this period represents the catechumenate "in its most authentic form" (see also pp. 107–11); Dujarier ignores the link between third-century initiatory polity and its sectarian views of church; he also ignores pastoral problems noted in the texts (e.g., hesitancy of candidates, apostasy, indifference within congregations).

[75] Origen, *In Exodum* 13.3 (SC 321:380–82), complains about those who come to church with "their mind and heart on business dealings" and "profit" and

THE CATECHUMENATE: TRENDS IN THE GREEK EAST

In the early fourth century, persecutions ended. Beginning in 311 the emperor Constantine (d. 337) granted Christianity formal status as a legitimate religion. Its official toleration set off reverberations across the empire that came to alter church life and, as a consequence, the catechumenate.[76] Shifts within either the larger culture or the church necessarily affect the contours and tone of the catechumenate, which of its nature sits at the fluid frontier of church and world. The fourth century saw various shifts, and these left their impression on the catechumenate.

First, Christians were no longer a vulnerable minority subjected to intermittent persecution. They now began to enjoy certain privileges. What Constantine did for Christianity was not without venerable precedent. Emperors before him had lavished benefactions on their favorite cults, and such patronage was considered good piety; that is, if a god rewards one with health, good fortune, or military success it is only fitting to express one's gratitude, conversion, and obeisance by acting as a patron for the god's cult.[77] Constantine shared this traditional view. He attributed his military victories to the God of the Christians and in gratitude offered the churches his patronage. He built spacious basilicas and richly adorned shrines in Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople; he bequeathed endowments of land; he offered grain allowances

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"chatter so much, who disturb with their stories so much that they do not allow any silence" (trans. Ronald E. Heine, FOTC 71:738); cf. *In Genesim* 10.1-2. See Joseph Trigg, "Origen's Understanding of Baptism," *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982): 959–65.

[76] Constantine's conversion and its effects on Christianity continue to inspire a complex and contested scholarship. See Noel Lenski, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a survey of liturgical developments in this period see John F. Baldovin, "The Empire Baptized," 77–130 in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*.

[77] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 48–49.

and shelter to widows and orphans. He also accorded bishops privileges: they were granted immunity from burdensome civic and financial obligations; they received judicial powers that allowed them to hear local civil suits and preside over the manumission of slaves; for certain councils they used the imperial post for transportation (something traditionally reserved for imperial messengers and high state officials).[78] With these new powers came new expectations. Bishops found themselves called upon to serve as patrons for their communities and enmesh themselves in the intricate system of patronage that held together late Roman society.[79] This meant wielding powers and influence in matters both spiritual and secular: settling feuds, forwarding lawsuits, getting debts canceled, even lobbying for favors in the imperial court.

Second, the churches faced a surge of new converts. It is easy to point to famous cases of highly articulate, well-educated converts such as Augustine or Paulinus of Nola, but these offer a poor basis for making generalizations. They do little to account for an array of conversions that touched widely disparate ethnic groups, social classes, and geographic locales. The wide spread of conversions is difficult to account for since the historical record gives scant attention to the lives and feelings of the mass of ordinary people. Ramsay MacMullen and A. H. M. Jones have suggested various factors: the new tolerance allowed Christian evangelical campaigns to take place unchecked by government authorities; Constantine's embrace of Christianity helped publicize it and did much to make it at least socially acceptable; the benefits that Constantine lavished on the churches drew public attention to them and helped make them major public centers; the favors Constantine and his sons gave their coreligionists made it politic in certain circles (especially government and the military) to become Christian; pagan cults faced a slowly mounting body of legislation that curtailed their

[78] Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 44–53; Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 622–23, 667–69.

[79] Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

activities and depleted their state-supported revenues.[80] None of these guaranteed conversion, nor did fourth-century emperors force conversions as later medieval rulers would do. Paganism maintained robust strongholds both in the countryside and among the aristocracy.[81] Christianity remained, in the main, an urban movement dominated by the lower and middle classes. Its progress was fitful and subject to enormous local variation.

Third, the fourth century witnessed much-contested public controversies over key points of doctrine. Such disputes had plagued local communities in the third century, but in the fourth they assumed a broader, more international character. There were frequent councils, both regional and empire-wide; those later named "ecumenical," Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381, would in the long run become the most famous, but there were many other well-attended and well-publicized ones.[82] Theological controversy was hardly confined to bishops or councils; it became part of the routine banter one heard in bazaars or bathhouses. As Gregory of Nyssa (d. 396) famously complained about his experience while in Constantinople: "If you ask someone for change, he will discuss with you whether the Son is begotten or unbegotten. If you ask about the quality of bread, you will receive the answer that 'the Father is greater, the Son is less.' If you suggest that you require a

[80] A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1:90–96; MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, esp. 49–67, 86–101.

[81] A. H. M. Jones, "The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity," 17–37 in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[82] For a comprehensive survey see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381 AD* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988); see also Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Hans Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine: The Theological Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

bath, you will be told that 'there was nothing before the Son was created.'"[83] Fourth-century bishops and catechists devoted great care to teaching catechumens doctrinal essentials, especially the doctrine of the Trinity. That doctrine was central to the catechumenate since it defined who Christians said God is and it defined the faith that catechumens affirmed as they stood in the waist-deep waters of baptism. And, of course, the newly baptized were expected to defend their decision and faith not only to family but also among friends or in the often noisy banter of the marketplace.

Fourth, this century witnessed several generations of extraordinary Christian thinkers, all highly educated, many trained as rhetoricians. Many served as bishops of local churches and made the teaching of catechumens and neophytes a regular and central pastoral duty. Among the major fourth-century catechumenal documents are verbatim transcripts of their talks. The quality of catechesis was often extraordinary, a heady blend of biblical spirituality, doctrinal precision, and rhetorical flare. And they came to the task with a deep confidence in the power of words to shape conversion. As Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389), among the most eloquent of these, once boldly put it to his catechumens: "Today I need to write *in* you and impress *upon* you what is needed for perfection. . . . Give me the tablets of your heart. I am Moses for you. . . . I write *in* you a new decalogue with the finger of God. I write *in* you a synopsis of salvation."[84]

Fifth, there was an uneasy shift away from a church of the few and the pure and toward a church of the many—a "mixed-up

[83] Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti* (PG 46:557). The slogans Gregory quotes echo the views of the anti-Nicene Eunomius of Cyzicus, who had been influential for a time in the imperial capital. His party's views, eventually condemned, led to alternative baptismal practices and formulae. See Maurice F. Wiles, "Triple and Single Immersion: Baptism in the Arian Controversy," *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 337–49.

[84] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.45 (SC 358:302–4); author's translation. See Susanna Elm, "Inscriptions and Conversions: Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism (*Or.* 38-40)," 1–35 in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

body" (*corpus permixtum*), as Augustine called it. Memories of the old rigor persisted. The cult of the martyrs remained a potent and sometimes disruptive force. So too was the emerging monastic movement, with its athletic asceticism that retained rigorist strains and even took them to new heights. Then there were various protest movements such as those associated with Pelagius and his circle, who called for higher standards among the aristocracy where Christianity ever so slowly was becoming a politically correct stance. The orthodox churches, while decidedly countercultural, came to embrace the task of trying to create a Christian culture, with all the uneasy risks of such a venture.

These shifts in both the fourth-century church and the wider milieu combined to challenge and reshape the tone and temper of the inherited ritual structures, pedagogies, and moral expectations of the third century. When we today speak of a "Christianization of the Roman Empire" it is crucial to savor the catechumenate's role in this. The catechumenate was precisely the cutting edge where such Christianization took place, where it became personal, where it touched individuals' lives and those of their families and local communities. Its day-to-day workings were largely uncelebrated and underreported. Yet over the next century, year after year, within catechumenates of individual churches across the empire, person after person after person was instructed and formed in his or her Christian faith and lifestyle, tested, and brought to communion. In other words, much of the "Christianization of the Roman Empire" took place via the framework we call catechumenate. Bringing about change on an empire-wide scale was, of necessity, demanding and messy and uneven.

In the remainder of this chapter I will survey the three periods of initiation that emerge in the fourth century: a catechumenate phase, a final training prior to baptism often linked to the emergence of Lent, and a mystagogical formation in the days after Easter. I will draw my examples from the Greek East, since we will explore Ambrose's catechumenate in Milan in the next chapter and follow that with a detailed examination of Augustine's catechumenate in Hippo in the remaining chapters.

We have less information about the broad catechumenate period when compared with what we know of formation immediately prior to and following baptism. Length of the catechumenate varied. The Council of Elvira in 305 legislated that "those who come to the beginning of faith, if they are of good behavior, may be admitted to the grace of baptism after two years."[85] The church order known as *The Apostolic Tradition* (whose legislation was long believed to describe third-century patterns but now seems more likely to reflect fourth-century ones) dictated a three-year catechumenate.[86] Its legislation is echoed in the later fourth-century Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions*: "The candidate will be instructed for a period of three years. Whoever is zealous and demonstrates eagerness during this time is to be received by you, for judgment depends not on time but on conduct. The catechist, even if a lay person and provided that he or she has experience with the word and is upright in conduct, is to teach, for 'they shall all be taught by God' (Jn 6:45)."[87] Many raised in Christian families were made

[85] Council of Elvira, *Canon* 42, trans. E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy*, 3d ed. by Maxwell E. Johnson, Alcuin Club Collection 79 (London: SPCK, 2003), 154.

[86] *Apostolic Tradition* 17. For the text and a commentary, see Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, eds., *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002). For much of the twentieth century this document was believed to have been compiled by the third-century Roman presbyter Hippolytus. That dating and attribution have been seriously challenged; see Paul F. Bradshaw, "Redating the Apostolic Tradition: Some Preliminary Steps," 3–17 in *Rule of Prayer, Rule of Faith: Essays in Honor of Aidan Kavanagh, OSB*, ed. John F. Baldovin and Nathan Mitchell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996); John F. Baldovin, "Hippolytus and the *Apostolic Tradition*: Recent Research and Commentary," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 520–42.

[87] *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.16 (SC 336:238–40); trans. *WEC* 2:270 (modified). On this document see Joseph G. Mueller, "The Ancient Church Order Literature: Genre or Tradition?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007): 337–80. The compiler had detectable anti-Nicene commitments; see T. A. Kopecek, "Neo-Arian Religion: The Evidence of the Apostolic Constitutions," 153–80 in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (1983; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006). For an overview of its baptismal theology see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 564–73.

catechumens as children but did not seek baptism until adulthood, and thus spent long years as catechumens.

As for formation, certain traditional patterns persisted.[88] Catechumens attended liturgies of the word, certainly on Sundays but other days as well.[89] At these, ordinary catechumens received their primary—and in all probability, their only—formal instruction. Fourth-century preachers used to turn to catechumens in their larger assemblies and address them directly when they dealt with biblical texts that had baptismal overtones. When John Chrysostom (d. 407) preached on the story of Nicodemus (John 3), he first pleaded with the baptized to lead "a life worthy of . . . the mysteries." He then turned to the catechumens: "You who have not yet been deemed worthy of them, do everything so as to become worthy, that we may be one body, that we may be brothers and sisters."[90] After the sermon, prayers would be offered for

[88] Dujarier, *History of the Catechumenate*, 94, makes the very odd claim that in the fourth century "the catechumenate, properly speaking, no longer existed." By "catechumenate" he apparently means the sort described in the *Apostolic Tradition*, whose dating, authorship, and contents (as noted above) are much contested; the very legislation he so admires may date from the fourth, not the third century, and probably describes ideals rather than actual practices. Dujarier's claim also flies in the face of basic facts: that fourth-century bishops certainly believed the catechumenate was very much in existence and that it required them to take considerable effort to deal with the catechumens who had joined their assemblies. In chapter 4 I will return to these issues in greater detail.

[89] Catechumens may also have attended liturgies of the hours. Egeria, a Spanish pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in the late fourth century, regularly mentions the presence of catechumens at prayer services of the Jerusalem churches she visited. Notable in *Itinerarium* 24.6-9 (SC 296:240–42) is her description of the formal dismissal of catechumens at Vespers.

[90] John Chrysostom, *In s. Johannis evangelium*, Homily 25.3 (PG 59:151); trans. Thomas A. Goggin, *Saint John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John*, FOTC 41:248. On his life, context, and works see J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2000); Jaclyn Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the catechumens. In Chrysostom's Antioch catechumens did not mingle with the baptized, but stood apart—"far from the sacred precincts," as he put it.[91] At the deacon's call for prayer, catechumens knelt or prostrated themselves full-length on the floor. Then the deacon intoned a long and quite beautiful prayer, asking: "that [God] would open the ears of their hearts and instill into them the word of truth . . . that He would unveil to them the gospel of righteousness, that He would grant to them a godly mind, sound judgment, and virtuous manner of life . . . that He would count them worthy in due season of the regeneration of the font, of the remission of sins, of the clothing of incorruption, that He would bless their comings in and goings out, the whole course of their life."[92] After the deacon's prayer and the faithful's Amen, catechumens rose, received a blessing, and were dismissed.[93] They were not permitted to witness the Eucharist itself.

While this traditional way of forming catechumens remained, the milieu had changed. In the third century catechumens were fewer. Worship in a community such as Tertullian's would have taken place in a modest-sized house-church. Catechumens' presence or absence at liturgies could be dutifully noted, and their progress and lifestyle scrutinized. In the fourth century the larger numbers of catechumens made supervision and pastoral care more difficult. Catechumens no longer enjoyed the support (and scrutiny) of an intimate, if embattled, community; they could now drift in and out more anonymously, one more face among crowds that now began filling the basilicas.

[91] John Chrysostom, *In epistolam 2 ad Corinthios*, Homily 2.6 (PG 61:40); trans. Talbot Chambers, NPNF 12:282. See Thomas M. Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom*, SCA 15 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 35.

[92] John Chrysostom, *In epistolam 2 ad Corinthios*, Homily 2.6-8, gives a line-by-line commentary on this prayer for the catechumens. Its reconstruction is from Talbot Chambers, NPNF 12:281–82 n11. A similar prayer is found in the fourth-century Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.6.

[93] Egeria reports a similar ritual pattern at the close of liturgies of the hours in Jerusalem. On these see Kavanagh, *Confirmation*, 12–14.

In fourth-century sources one comes across complaints about motives. One always has to weigh such complaints, where they come from, who is making them, whether they reflect widespread realities or local problems or simply voice the *bête noire* of a highly articulate complainer.[94] There were, it seems, a certain number of political opportunists. Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), a bishop and learned historian who moved among the very highest echelons of the Roman Empire, complained about "an unspeakable deceit on the part of those who slipped into the Church and adopted the false façade of the Christian name" to win political favors.[95] This complaint should not be overgeneralized—it reflects a report only about the most elite circles. Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem (d. 387), complains that even some on the eve of baptism were there for less-than-exemplary motives: "Perhaps some man among you has come because he wants to win the approval of his girlfriend; the same can apply to women too. Perhaps a slave has wanted to please his master or someone has wanted to please a friend."[96] While there were enough conversions of this type to merit such remarks, most converted, it seems, for sincerely religious motives.[97] The greater problem involved weaning people from deeply ingrained cultural habits that, according to a traditional and often old-fashioned Christian morality, seemed pagan: theater-going, attending public games, consulting astrologers, wearing charms. Some preachers, such as John Chrysostom, could portray catechumens in the most unflattering terms: "The catechumen is a sheep

[94] Some scholars (Dujarier, *History of the Catechumenate*, 94ff.; Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins*, 218–19) have taken complaints about politic conversions and suspect motives at face value.

[95] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini* 4.54 (SC 559:520); trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 174. The context is Eusebius's defense of Constantine's sincerity in being baptized. On Eusebius's context and career see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*; Michael J. Hollerich, "Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the First 'Court Theologian,'" *Church History* 59 (1990): 309–25.

[96] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 5 (PG 33:541); trans. Edward Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2000), 81.

[97] See Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 2:979–80.

without a seal; he is a deserted inn and a hostel without a door, which lies open to all without distinction; he is a lair for robbers, a refuge for wild beasts, a dwelling place for demons."[98]

Another widely reported pastoral problem concerned catechumens who delayed advancing further.[99] Tertullian too had complained of hesitant catechumens and had in some cases even advised delay. In interpreting fourth-century complaints it is important to pay attention to who is complaining and why and when, as well as what deeper motives may have led to delays. An older (and still repeated) scholarly interpretation was that "the catechumenate was the customary status of the nominal Christian, the one who lacked the courage for baptism but was ashamed to be called a heathen."[100] This plays into a larger and still-common scholarly narrative that after Constantine the church supposedly "declined," that Christianization meant absorbing and adapting pagan practices and imagery.[101] To interpret reports of delay we need to be alert to

[98] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 10.16 (= II.7, SC 366:192); trans. Paul W. Harkins, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, ACW 31:155. The numbering of Chrysostom's baptismal instructions varies from edition to edition; I have followed that used by Harkins.

[99] On reports of the delay of baptism and their interpretation see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 617–27; Éric Rebillard, "La figure du catéchumène et le problème du délai du baptême dans la pastorale d'Augustin," 285–92 in *Augustin Prédicateur (395–411): Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5–7 Sept, 1996)*, ed. Goulven Madec, CEASA 159 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1998). I will return to this issue in Augustine's church in chapter 4, especially in the "Excursus: Delay of Baptism?"

[100] Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 357.

[101] On this older scholarly narrative see Daniel H. Williams, "Constantine, Nicaea, and the 'Fall' of the Church," 117–36 in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric, and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998). Paul Bradshaw, *Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 213–15, describes Christian liturgy after Constantine as in "decline": "many of the fourth-century liturgical developments were responses of a Church *which had already passed its peak*, was experiencing *the beginnings of decline*, and was trying to do something to stem the tide"; he then speaks of fourth-century catecheses and initiation rites "appropriating language, images, and ceremonies from

certain broader perspectives. First, the fourth-century norm was adult baptism. Infant baptism, first mentioned by Tertullian (who opposed it), was widely practiced but nearly always as *emergency* baptism; given the high infant mortality rate of the era, it may have been a fairly frequent practice (even if few of those baptized actually survived).[102] It was common for those from Christian families to be baptized only in their twenties or early thirties. Basil of Caesarea, who came from a venerable and deeply pious Christian family, was baptized at the age of 26; his friend Gregory of Nazianzus, whose father was the local bishop, was baptized at 28; Ambrose of Milan was in his thirties.[103] In some cases "delay" may have been prompted less by people's ill will and more by their response to Christianity's ethical rigors. In the third century, as we saw, certain professions and business practices were forbidden, tainted by their "pagan" associations. Fourth-century churches maintained some of these standards and adjusted others. Such professionals might be accepted as catechumens but barred from baptism. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, reports that those in politics feared that they were "stained" by it; he advised that they leave politics altogether, that they "flee from the public forum . . . for what do you have to do with Caesar or what belongs to Caesar."[104] According to A. H. M. Jones the source of the problem was the church itself: it "had built up its code when it was a small exclusive society of the elect" and

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pagan practice" (emphasis added). This judgment presupposes that third-century Christians had not drawn catechetical language and ritual gestures from local culture prior to this and that fourth-century Christians were uncritical absorbers of their cultural and intellectual world.

[102] Tertullian, *De baptismo* 18 (SC 35:92–93). On the origins and rise of infant baptism see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 362–79, 627–33; on circumstances in North Africa see William Harmless, "Christ the Pediatrician: Augustine on the Diagnosis and Treatment of the Injured Vocation of the Child," 127–53 in *The Vocation of the Child*, ed. Patrick McKinley Brennan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). One notable but rare figure baptized as an infant was Augustine's late opponent, Julian of Eclanum.

[103] David F. Wright, "At What Ages Were People Baptized in the Early Centuries?" *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 389–94.

[104] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.19 (SC 358:238); author's translation.

thus "set its standards too high, and insisted too strongly that any major lapse entailed eternal damnation."[105]

One finds various exuberant rhetorical denunciations of the "delay" of baptism. John Chrysostom, a richly skilled and often exuberant rhetor, noted that the apostles Andrew and Peter "merely heard of Him who takes away the sin of the world and at once they ran to Him"; he then remarked: "Is it not, then, utter senselessness to defer accepting the gift? Let the catechumens listen to this—those who are putting off to their last breath their own salvation."[106] In one sermon he entertained his baptismal candidates with a portrait of a catechumen who delayed baptism until his deathbed:

> Even if the grace is the same for you and for those who are initiated on their deathbeds, neither the choice nor the preparations are the same. They receive baptism in their beds, but you receive it in the bosom of the common mother of us all, the Church; they receive baptism amidst laments and tears, but you are baptized with rejoicing and gladness; they are groaning, while you are giving thanks; their high fever leaves them in a stupor, while you are filled with an abundance of spiritual pleasure. . . . The dying man weeps and laments as he is baptized, his children stand about in tears, his wife mars her cheeks with her nails, his friends are downcast, his servants' eyes well with tears, and the whole house gives the appearance of a gloomy winter's day. . . . Then, in the midst of such tumult and confusion, the priest comes in, and his arrival is a greater source of fear than the fever itself and harder than death for the sick man's relatives. When he enters, their despair is deeper than when the physician said he had given up all hope for the patient's life. Thus, he who is an argument for eternal life is seen as a symbol of death.[107]

[105] Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 2:979; see his discussion on pp. 979–85.

[106] John Chrysostom, *In s. Johannis evangelium*, Homily 18.1 (PG 59:115); trans. Goggin, FOTC 33:175.

[107] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 9.5-8 (= I.3-4, SC 366:118–22); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:133–34. For an overview of "clinical" (i.e., deathbed) baptisms see Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism*, 27–30; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 618–26.

This portrait illustrates more about Chrysostom's skills in word-painting and his acerbic wit than it does about the health of the catechumenate. Of course, the most famous convert of the era, Constantine, was baptized on his deathbed. But once again, that tells us more about the dirty and often deadly business of imperial politics than about the state of the catechumenate.

Sermons on the "delay" of baptism were often occasioned by the liturgical year. Gregory of Nazianzus and his Cappadocian friends, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, used the feast of Epiphany (which commemorated not only Jesus' birth but his baptism as well) as a time for baptizing candidates. Sermons from these days served as prime opportunities for catechizing on the meaning of baptism. The Cappadocians also used these occasions as times to recruit other catechumens to begin the process of turning in their names for baptism.[108] In these sermons Gregory of Nazianzus denounces delays with an array of rhetorical strategies. He appeals to his catechumens' common sense: "How absurd it is to cling to accumulating wealth and yet be lackadaisical about caring for your health, to keeping your body clean as a top priority and yet put soul-cleansing into second place, to seek out freedom from slavery here below and not worry about freedom on high."[109] He tantalizes them by claiming that baptism would give them access to ineffable mysteries: "As long as you're a catechumen you stand in the outer

[108] Everett Ferguson, "Exhortations to Baptism in the Cappadocians," *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 121–29; idem, "Basil's Protreptic to Baptism," 70–83 in *Nova et Vetera: Patristic Studies in Honor of Thomas Patrick Halton*, ed. John Petruccione (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998).

[109] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.13 (SC 358:224); author's translation. This sermon, *On Baptism*, is the third in a trilogy (preceded by *Oratio* 38: *On the Theophany* and *Oratio* 39: *On the Holy Lights*); the three were delivered in the days up to and including January 6, 381, soon after Gregory's installation as bishop of Constantinople. For a translation of *Orationes* 38 and 39 see Brian E. Daley, ed., *Gregory of Nazianzus*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2006), 117–38; for *Oratio* 40 see Nonna Verna Harrison, ed., *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: Festal Orations* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008). For a detailed analysis see John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 336–47.

court of prayer; you need to come in, to cross the hall and contemplate the holy, to enter into the Holy of Holies, to be in the presence of the Trinity."[110] He plays on fears of hell and warns that death might come unexpectedly—through war, earthquakes, sudden illness, a political purge, choking on food, falling from a horse.[111] These sermons by Gregory and the other Cappadocians contain sparkling theology and rhetorical acumen, but the intent behind them was the same as an evangelical preacher's altar call: to bring people to the water.

LENT: TRENDS IN THE GREEK EAST

By 325, Lent (or "the forty days," as it was called) was emerging as part of the liturgical calendar, though its exact length and ordering differed from place to place.[112] It came to be used as a time for intensive formation of those getting ready for baptism. The contours and tenor of this formation can be gleaned from various collections of Lenten catecheses that have come down to us: the nineteen by Cyril of Jerusalem (delivered in the 350s),[113] the fourteen by Theodore of Mopsuestia (delivered sometime between 392

[110] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.16 (SC 358:230–32); author's translation.

[111] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.14 (SC 358:226–28). Cf. Chrysostom, *In s. Johannis evangelium*, Homily 25.3 (PG 59:152).

[112] On the emergence of Lent and Holy Week see the classic study of Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2d ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 168–230; for recent perspectives see Bradshaw and Johnson, *Feasts, Fasts and Seasons*, 89–119. It has been traditional to point to Canon 5 of the Council of Nicaea as the earliest reference to a forty-day Lent, but its interpretation is complex. According to the festal letters of Athanasius (after 330), Lent in Alexandria lasted six weeks; according to Egeria (*Itinerarium* 27.1) Lent's forty-day fast in Jerusalem lasted eight weeks (i.e., not counting Saturday and Sunday), but her witness has been variously interpreted; other Jerusalem sources, such as the Armenian Lectionary, indicate six weeks.

[113] For Cyril's Lenten sermons see PG 33:369–1060; for a translation of the *Procatechesis* and *Catecheses* 3–6, 10–14, and 18, see Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem*; an older but complete translation is by Leo McCauley, *The Works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem*, FOTC 61 and 64. For studies see John F. Baldovin, *Liturgy in Ancient Jerusalem*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 9 (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove, 1989); Alexis J. Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue: The Authorship of the*

and 428),[114] and the six by John Chrysostom (delivered in Antioch between 388 and 390).[115] We also have a travelogue, the *Itinerarium*, from a Spanish pilgrim named Egeria who visited the Holy Land near the end of the fourth century and who describes liturgies and catecheses she witnessed in Jerusalem.[116]

These late fourth-century documents offer vivid accounts of the training and a window into the diversity of approaches. They also

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Mystagogic Catecheses, Patristic Monograph Series 17 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

[114] Theodore's text is preserved solely in an ancient Syriac translation. For the text see Raymond Tonneau and Robert Devreesse, eds., *Les homélies catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste*, Studi e Testi 145 (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticano, 1949); for an English translation see Alphonse Mingana, ed. and trans., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*, WS 5 (Cambridge: Heffer, 1932); idem, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, WS 6 (Cambridge: Heffer, 1933). I have followed the custom of English-speaking commentators in using the paragraph numbering of the Tonneau-Devreesse edition while using Mingana's translation. On Theodore's career and baptismal theology, see Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2008); S. Gerber, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und das Nicänum. Studien zu den katechetischen Homilien* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Frederick G. McLeod, "The Christological Ramifications of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Understanding of Baptism and the Eucharist," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 37–75; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 519–32.

[115] For the texts of Chrysostom's Lenten sermons see Antoine Wenger, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Huit catéchèses inédites*, SC 50 (Paris: Cerf, 1957); Auguste Piédagnel, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Trois Catéchèses baptismales*, SC 366 (Paris: Cerf, 1990); for a translation see Harkins, ACW 31. For a study see Finn, *Liturgy of Baptism*; also Philippe de Roten, *Baptême et mystagogie: Enquête sur l'initiation chrétienne selon s. Jean Chrysostom*, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 91 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2005); Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 533–63.

[116] For the text of Egeria's *Itinerarium* see Pierre Maraval, ed., *Égérie: Journal de voyage (Itinéraire)*, SC 296 (Paris: Cerf, 2002); for a translation with detailed commentary and charts see John Wilkinson, ed., *Egeria's Travels*, rev. ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1981). On the churches of Jerusalem and their liturgies see John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 228 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 45–104.

witness to a refining of vocabulary. Fourth-century authors began distinguishing advanced catechumens on the eve of baptism from ordinary ones. Greek authors referred to advanced catechumens as *photizomenoi* ("those being illuminated"); North African and other Western sources called them *competentes* ("petitioners"); Rome had the unique custom of calling them *electi* ("chosen ones"). Cyril of Jerusalem made much of the distinction when he addressed his new *photizomenoi* in an opening Lenten address, the *Procatechesis*:

> Consider the honour that Jesus is bestowing on you. Up till now you have been called a catechumen, one who hears from the outside. You heard hope, but you didn't know it. You heard mysteries, but you didn't understand them. You heard the Scriptures, but you didn't understand their depth. But now you are not hearing a sound outside you but one within, for now the Spirit lives in you and makes your mind God's home.[117]

In Jerusalem, Lent began with a formal enrollment of names. The Jerusalem rite described by Egeria had an air of high solemnity. On the first day of Lent those who had turned in their names came with their sponsors to the main church, the Martyrium. There the bishop personally presided over the proceedings. Seated on the traditional *cathedra*, surrounded by a retinue of presbyters and deacons, he questioned the godparent and neighbors of each candidate: "Is this person leading a good life? Does he respect his parents? Is he a drunkard or a boaster?" If the candidate was accepted, the bishop would note down the person's name; if denied, the bishop "tells him that he is to amend his ways before he may come to the font."[118] Note the emphasis: questions pertained not to theological matters but to lifestyle, to the quality of the lived apprenticeship.

[117] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 6 (PG 33:344); trans. Yarnold, *Cyril*, ECF, 81. Cyril plays here on the root meaning of "catechesis," namely, "echoing." No longer does God's word "echo" from the outside, but reaches down so that it touches the person's depths. Also noted in *Catechesis* 1.4, 5.1.

[118] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 45 (SC 296:306); trans. Wilkinson, 144.

Once enrolled, candidates embarked on a complex regimen that wove together three elements: (i) asceticism, (ii) instruction, and (iii) exorcism. The churches envisioned this as a sort of spiritual fitness program meant to touch mind, heart, body, and behavior. John Chrysostom once compared it to a training camp for wrestlers: "Let us learn during these days how we may gain the advantage over that wicked demon. . . . Let us learn, during this time of training, the grips he uses, the source of his wickedness, and how he can easily hurt us. Then, when the contest comes, we will not be caught unaware nor be frightened . . . because we have practiced among ourselves and have learned all his artifices."[119]

(i) *Asceticism*. During Lent candidates took up a rigorous ascetical discipline. It included all-night vigils, fasting, abstaining from alcohol, sleeping on the ground, weeping for one's sins, giving alms to the poor, even refraining from bathing.[120] Of these, almsgiving received the most catechetical attention. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, insisted that "another Lazarus is at your door" needing food and drink; that the sufferings of Christ are found in the masses of homeless; that candidates should "be a Zaccheus, yesterday a publican and today a person of generosity"; that if they find a debtor falling at their feet they should, unlike the hardhearted servant of Jesus' parable, "rip up every contract, whether just or unjust."[121] John Chrysostom in his usual prophetic style denounced the rigid class strictures of his day and insisted that the newly enrolled give witness to the justice of the kingdom: "That you may wear a single ruby, countless poor are starved and crushed. What defense will you find against this charge? . . . You received gold, not to bind your body with, but to help and feed the poor."[122]

[119] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 9.29 (PG 49:228); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:140–41.

[120] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 1.38 (SC 50:128); see also 12.7, 5.1-3.

[121] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 40.31 (SC 358:268–70); author's translation.

[122] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 12.41 (PG 49:237); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:185.

(ii) *Instruction*. These sources testify to a sophisticated and structured process of instruction. It is difficult to be sure how different such pedagogy was from third-century approaches.[123] Some pedagogies may represent a continuation of earlier ways; others, a refinement and expansion; still others, new developments. The instructional approaches found in these Lenten catecheses are so complex and varied that I can do no more than highlight a few salient features. Egeria provides a vivid account of their setting, length, and audience as found in Jerusalem. She says that talks were held, appropriately enough, in the Martyrium, the traditional site of the crucifixion. They lasted three hours and were given daily in the morning.[124] The bishop spoke to *photizomenoi* from his *cathedra*. They sat closely around him while their sponsors stood nearby. Some of the faithful also attended, but ordinary catechumens were barred.[125] The talks Egeria heard were stirring addresses; she reports that they aroused loud shouts and applause.[126]

The syllabus of these instructions varied considerably. Egeria reports that in Jerusalem the bishop spent the first five weeks surveying the entirety of Scripture, "expounding first its literal meaning and then explaining the spiritual meaning." After this the candidates were formally handed the creed, one of those secrets that, like the rites of baptism and Eucharist, was hidden from ordinary catechumens. The bishop then spent the remaining two weeks explaining the creed as he did the Scriptures, "expounding first the literal and then the spiritual sense." Formal instruction ended just before Holy Week. At this time each candidate recited the

[123] Older (but still cited) commentators interpreted these fourth-century documents in opposite ways. At one extreme is Dujarier, *History of the Catechumenate*, 109, who claims that this Lenten instruction was new, a way of squeezing the old three-year catechumenate into a few weeks; at the other is Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy*, 249, who claims that "the catechesis in Lent was what it had always been: a systematic introduction into the entire Christian doctrine, summed up in the *symbolum* [creed]." Neither interpretation has third-century materials sufficient to justify such broad claims.

[124] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 46.3 (SC 296:308).

[125] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 46.2 (SC 296:308).

[126] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 46.4 (SC 296:308–10).

creed back to the bishop; then the bishop offered a final sermon, noting that "the teaching about baptism itself is a deeper mystery, and you do not have the right to hear it while you remain catechumens. . . . You will hear it all during the eight days of Easter after you have been baptized."[127]

The surviving set of Cyril's catecheses follows a rather different arrangement.[128] He used the tenets of the Jerusalem Creed as the overarching framework: *Catecheses* 1 to 3 treat the phrase "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins"; *Catechesis* 4 gives an overview of essential Christian beliefs; *Catecheses* 5 to 18 then take up the remaining phrases of the creed phrase by phrase. In the middle of *Catechesis* 5 he formally handed over the creed and at the end of *Catechesis* 18 he formally received it back. Cyril likened this systematic approach to good construction techniques:

> Think of catechesis as if it were a house. If we don't use clamps in the right order to hold the structure together and to prevent gaps appearing so that the building becomes unsound, even our earlier efforts will be wasted. We must smooth away irregularities if the building is to rise. In the same way we bring you, so to speak, stones of knowledge. . . . I shall have many things to say in order: first I must explain them point by point, and only later in their mutual connections. If you don't join them together into a single whole, remembering what comes first and what second, I will have performed my task of building, but the structure you have will be unsound.[129]

While creedal phrases charted the main lines of this catechetical edifice, biblical stories shaped its interior. In practice Cyril linked the creed and the Scriptures in a complex way. Often he used

[127] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 46.6 (SC 296:312); trans. Wilkinson, 145 (modified).

[128] On this see Baldovin, *Urban Character*, 90–93, who suggests precise datings of Cyril's catecheses in light of the stational liturgies; see also Maxwell E. Johnson, "Reconciling Cyril and Egeria on the Catechetical Process in Fourth-Century Jerusalem," 18–30 in *Essays in Early Eastern Initiation*, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 8, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (Nottingham: Grove, 1988).

[129] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 11 (PG 33:352); trans. Yarnold, *Cyril*, ECF, 83.

the creed as a way of integrating and elucidating the Scriptures, sometimes as a searchlight to sweep rapidly across the biblical landscape, other times as a focused beam to illuminate a key biblical episode. This set up a complex dialectic. While the creed lit up the Scriptures, the Scriptures in turn demonstrated the truth of creedal claims. As Cyril said just before he recited the creed to his candidates:

> So for now, listen to the Creed and memorize it word for word, and in due time you will be taught the proof from the holy Scriptures for each point it contains. For the articles of the Creed were . . . collected from the whole of Scripture to make up a single exposition of the faith. Just as the mustard-seed contains its many branches in a tiny grain, so too this Creed embraces in a few words all the religious knowledge contained in the Old and New Testaments.[130]

Theodore of Mopsuestia also used the creed as a key element of his curricular outline (*Homilies* 1–10) but added expositions on the Lord's Prayer (*Homily* 11) and on baptism (*Homilies* 12–14). (I will take up later why he explained the secret baptismal rite *before* Easter.) Theodore listed quite different reasons for focusing on the creed: first, "that you might learn what to believe, and in the name of whom you are baptized"; second, that the creed is "our part in the mysteries" (presumably he means that candidates needed to understand the three creedal questions that would be asked them during the baptismal rite itself); and third, that the words have so "much power hidden in them" and are so condensed that they need exposition to tease out their subtle and potent mysteries.[131] Theodore was, at heart, a mystagogue, a "teacher of mysteries," and felt that the creed gave one access to otherwise ineffable mysteries. He justified an exposition on the Lord's Prayer by claiming that while the creed provided knowledge of mystery, the Lord's Prayer contained

[130] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 5.12 (PG 33:520–22); trans. Yarnold, *Cyril*, ECF, 114.

[131] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 12.1 (Tonneau, 342–45); trans. Mingana, WS 6:17.

"teaching of good works."[132] These, along with the "mysteries" of baptism and Eucharist, were "symbols" that initiated one in a way that joined the Christian present to the Christian future: "we might gradually approach our future hope . . . while cultivating a conduct that is in harmony with the new world."[133] For Theodore, catechesis prepared one for eschatological living.

John Chrysostom's prebaptismal instructions have no apparent overarching framework. He mentions other teachers, so it is possible that he left more systematic instruction to others.[134] His concern—always passionate—was moral formation. His talks may be hard to outline, but his admonitions were crisp and his directives were clear. He denounced some of the same vices Tertullian had condemned: oaths, public games, women's makeup, tinkering with omens, charms, and incantations.[135] Like Tertullian he saw these as pomps of the devil. However, his moralism focused not on the baptismal renunciation as Tertullian's had, but on the new life made possible by baptism: "Those who administer the affairs of state are clad in robes bearing the imperial images. . . . How much more should this be the case with you who are about to put on Christ himself!"[136]

Noting frameworks and outlines gives one little taste for their actual in-the-moment dynamic. These talks were emotionally charged. Cyril in the *Procatechesis* greeted the new *photizomenoi* with great warmth: "Already, my dear candidates for enlightenment, the scent of blessedness has come upon you; already you

[132] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 11.1 (Tonneau, 280–83); trans. Mingana, WS 6:1.

[133] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 1.4 (Tonneau, 6–7); trans. Mingana, WS 5:20. See Johannes Quasten, "The Liturgical Mysticism of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 431–39.

[134] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 10.2 (= II.1, SC 366:166–68).

[135] John Chrysostom denounces shows in *Baptismal Instruction* 1.43 and 12.52; women's fashions in 1.34-38 and 12.42-47; superstitions in 1.39-40 and 12.53-60. Oaths remain his most passionately despised *bête noire*: e.g., 9.36-47; 10.18-29.

[136] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 1.45 (SC 50:131); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:41. See also 1.46, 2.11, 2.27, 11.7.

are gathering spiritual flowers to weave into heavenly crowns; already the perfume of the Holy Spirit has breathed upon you. You are already outside the outer hall of the palace; I pray that the king may lead you inside."[137] Chrysostom opened one of his with a similar warmth ("How I have loved and longed for the throng of my new brethren!") and paid court to his candidates as people of great dignity ("I will do what people do when a man is going to acquire ruling power").[138] While these catecheses are called "instructions," they are rarely abstract or didactic. They instruct more with down-to-earth proverbs, striking analogies, or terse biblical *exempla*. Teachers like Chrysostom drew on everyday scenes and imagery—from civil service, judicial proceedings, medical practice, business, crafts, sports, war, marriage, slavery—to give a vividness and poignancy to their message.

(iii) *Exorcism*. Egeria noted that in Jerusalem exorcisms were part of the daily Lenten routine.[139] Cyril, too, alluded to their frequency and in the *Procatechesis* explained their meaning: "Be earnest in submitting to the exorcisms. . . . Imagine an unworked lump of gold that is adulterated and combined with a variety of other substances, like bronze, tin, iron and lead. We are trying to get pure gold."[140] John Chrysostom (who mentions these more routine cleansings) and Theodore both stressed a major exorcism that took place some time before the vigil.[141] In Mopsuestia—and in Augustine's Hippo, as we will see later—candidates stood barefoot on a sackcloth of goat's hair (*cilicium*) with their heads veiled, their outer cloaks stripped off, and their arms outstretched. Then the exorcist approached and spoke "in a loud and prolonged voice," denouncing Satan. To explain the rite's meaning Theodore used a courtroom

[137] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 1 (PG 33:332–33); trans. Yarnold, *Cyril*, ECF, 79.

[138] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 9.1 (= I.1, SC 366:112); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:131.

[139] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 46 (SC 296:306).

[140] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 9 (PG 33:348–49); trans. Yarnold, *Cyril*, ECF, 82.

[141] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 9.11 (=I.7, SC 366:124–26).

analogy: the candidate was the accused; the devil, the plaintiff; the exorcist, the defense lawyer. By his words the exorcist showed that the candidate was innocent, that he or she had suffered a form of cruel slavery, and that the devil "had forcibly and unjustly brought him under his rule."[142] John Chrysostom described the exorcists' role in a different way: "as if they were preparing a house for a royal visit, they cleanse your minds by those awesome words."[143]

MYSTAGOGY: TRENDS IN THE GREEK EAST

By the late fourth century Easter had become the favored day for initiation in many locales, East and West. We saw glimpses earlier of the third-century North African rites of initiation; we will survey the rites in Milan in the next chapter and those in Hippo in chapter 7. Here let me sketch a single Eastern example, namely, the Jerusalem rite as it can be reconstructed from Cyril's *Mystagogic Catecheses*.[144] I do so to keep us alert to the diversity, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, among the ancient rites themselves, as well as between them and their modern counterparts. (See chart 13).

[142] Theodore, *Catechetical Homily* 12.22-23 (Tonneau, 358–59); trans. Mingana, WS 6:31. See Johannes Quasten, "Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Exorcism of the Cilicium," *Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942): 209–19.

[143] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 2.12 (SC 50:114–15); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:47–48. In 2.14 Chrysostom draws on an analogy from the way prisoners of war were treated.

[144] For the text see Auguste Piédagnel, ed., *Cyrille de Jérsualem: Catéchèses mystagogiques*, SC 126bis (Paris: Cerf, 2004); for a translation see Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 70–97. There has been a longstanding dispute on the authorship of the five *Mystagogic Catecheses* attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem. Two recent studies summarize the debate, offer new perspectives, and come to opposite conclusions: Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogue*, offers a sustained argument for the traditional attribution to Cyril; Juliette Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth and Fifth Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria and Egypt* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2007), favors their present form coming from Cyril's successor, John of Jerusalem. I find Doval's arguments stronger and follow the traditional attribution. Both authors offer valuable reconstructions and detailed studies of the Jerusalem rite and comparison with rites elsewhere in the East.

In Jerusalem initiation took place during the Easter Vigil. The *photizomenoi* and the clergy gathered at a free-standing baptistery not far from the basilica of the Martyrium.[145] They first entered the outer chamber. There, candidates were instructed to turn to the west and renounce "Satan . . . and all your works . . . and all your pomp . . . and your worship," addressing him "as though he stood there before you."[146] Then they turned around, from west to east, and said: "I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and in one baptism of repentance."[147] They then moved into the inner chamber of the baptistery, stripped naked (the room was probably dark, and the sexes were separated), and were anointed from head to foot with "exorcized oil."[148] They then were "led to the holy pool of divine baptism." Standing there naked in the water, they were asked three questions, whether they believed in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and were immersed after each answer.[149] Cyril then says that "when you emerged from the pool of sacred waters you were anointed in a manner corresponding to Christ's anointing"; the anointing was with perfumed oil (chrism) and the newly baptized were anointed on the forehead, ears, nostrils, and breast.[150] At some point they were clothed with a white garment.[151]

[145] See Alexis Doval, "The Location and Structure of the Baptistery in the *Mystagogic Catecheses* of Cyril of Jerusalem," *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993): 1–13; Juliette Day, *Baptism in Early Byzantine Palestine 325–451*, Alcuin / GROW 43 (Cambridge: Grove, 1999), 18–24.

[146] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.2, 4, 5, 6, 8 (SC 126bis:84–94); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 71–73.

[147] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.9 (SC 126bis:98); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 74–75.

[148] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 2.2-3 (SC 126bis:104–6).

[149] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 2.4 (SC 126bis:100); *Catechesis* 17.14-15 (PG 33:985–88).

[150] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 3.1, 4 (SC 126bis:120, 126); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 82. There is no mention here of any hand laying such as one finds in Western rites; for a discussion see Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Mystagogue*, 143–45.

[151] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 4.8 (SC 126bis:124–44), does not specify *when* the candidates received their baptismal robes but refers to them via scriptural quotations and after the fact.

After the baptism and chrismation the bishop and the newly baptized processed from the baptistery to the circular chapel of the Anastasis, built over Jesus' empty tomb, and there sang a hymn.[152] From there they processed back to the basilica, where the larger congregation had been keeping its all-night vigil. The newly baptized (referred to as neophytes, "newly enlightened ones") were now privileged to witness and participate in the Eucharist for the first time. The deacon opened by calling for a kiss of peace, welcoming the newcomers.[153] The Eucharistic Prayer followed. It began with the traditional dialogue: "Let us lift up our hearts. . . . We have lifted them up to the Lord. . . . Let us give thanks to the Lord. . . . It is right and just."[154] The bishop then offered a long prayer that included an invocation of the Holy Spirit "so that he may make the bread Christ's body and the wine Christ's blood, for clearly whatever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and transformed."[155] It continued with commendations for the living and for the dead and closed with a final "Amen." The congregation together recited the Lord's Prayer.[156] The bishop then invited the congregation to communion, saying, "Holy things for the holy."[157] As the congregation approached, the cantor chanted Psalm 33: "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord." One by one, the newly baptized received first the consecrated bread in their hands, cupping their right hand in their left, and receiving it with

[152] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 38.1 (SC 296:290).

[153] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.3 (SC 126bis:148).

[154] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.4-5 (SC 126bis:150–52); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 91.

[155] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.7 (SC 126bis:154); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 92. There has been considerable debate over the absence of a Last Supper narrative within Cyril's eucharistic prayer. For a discussion see Emmanuel Cutrone, "Cyril's Catecheses and the Jerusalem Anaphora," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44 (1978): 52–64; Edward J. Yarnold, "Anaphoras without Institution Narratives?" *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 395–410; Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem*, 150–61.

[156] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.11-17 (SC 126bis:160–68).

[157] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.19 (SC 126bis:168).

an "Amen."[158] Then they received the cup (presumably from a deacon), first bowing, then with an "Amen" they drank from it.[159] The service closed with a final prayer.[160]

Over the course of Easter Week the newly baptized came each day for a series of final catecheses, known as *mystagogia* ("teaching of the mysteries"), which used the rites as springboard.[161] One finds two quite different traditions on the timing and the outline. Cyril of Jerusalem typifies one of these: that the "mysteries" of baptism, chrismation, and Eucharist can be explained only *after* initiation. He set out his rationale in his opening words to the newly baptized: "For some time now, true-born and dearly loved children of the Church, I have desired to speak to you about these spiritual and heavenly mysteries. But I knew well that seeing is more trustworthy than hearsay, and so I waited until this moment to find you more amenable to my words so that, drawing on your personal experience, I would be able to lead you into the brighter and more fragrant meadows of Paradise on earth."[162] Cyril believed that the discipline of secrecy (*disciplina arcani*) that had previously cloaked the sacraments simply enshrined a good pedagogical principle: that in matters of mystery, experience precedes explanation. Cyril trusted that being stripped naked, anointed from head to foot, dunked, then chrismated with pungent perfume was itself splendid catechesis. Only after initiates had drunk in and savored the rich elusive power of such symbols did instruction assume its proper place. Only then would the resonances of his theological

[158] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.20-21 (SC 126bis:168–72).

[159] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.22 (SC 126bis:172).

[160] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 5.22 (SC 126bis:172), in his closing comments, instructs the neophytes to "wait for the prayer," implying that some in Cyril's church (as some today) departed right after communion.

[161] The classic study is Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Ambrose of Milan*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 17 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974).

[162] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.1 (SC 126bis:82–84); author's translation.

reflections have their proper poignancy. Cyril, therefore, delivered his five *Mystagogic Catecheses* during Easter week. Ambrose, Augustine's mentor, would follow this same approach.

John Chrysostom and Theodore worked from a different tradition. As they saw it, one explained the rites of baptism *just prior* to the Vigil. Augustine, as we will see, would follow this same pattern. Chrysostom once cited his reasons for "anticipating the event": first, "that you might be carried on by the wings of hope and enjoy the pleasure before you enjoyed the actual benefit"; and, second, that "you might . . . see the objects of bodily sight more clearly with the eyes of the spirit," since the rite's real dynamic was worked by God invisibly.[163] Chrysostom's two mystagogical instructions on baptism were delivered prior to initiation (probably on Holy Thursday); we also have six other addresses by him given to neophytes during Easter Week. Theodore, likewise, explained the rites of baptism *prior* to initiation and for reasons similar to Chrysostom's. Baptism in his view served as the "representation of unseen and unspeakable things through signs and emblems"; one must learn "the reason for all of them" that one might "receive the things that take place with great love."[164] While he spoke about the baptismal rite in advance, Theodore maintained strict silence about the Eucharist itself until after Easter.[165] Thus his three catecheses on baptism were given prior to Easter, while his two catecheses on Eucharist were given during Easter Week.

Egeria's account of mystagogy offers fascinating details about the setting and audience in Jerusalem. She noted that in the days between Easter and its octave the neophytes, together with any of the faithful, came to hear "the mysteries," but ordinary catechumens

[163] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 2.28 (SC 50:149); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:53–54.

[164] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 12.1-2 (Tonneau, 324–25); trans. Mingana, WS 6:17.

[165] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 14.29, 15.1 (Tonneau, 460–61). Chrysostom did not maintain such reserve, but his remarks on the Eucharist during Lent were meant to tantalize rather than explain: e.g., *Baptismal Instruction* 2.27 and 10.2.

were barred from entering. Whereas Lenten instructions had been given in the church on Golgotha, the mystagogical ones were given in the Anastasis, the Church of the Resurrection. She noted the great enthusiasm these received: "The applause is so loud that it can be heard outside the church. Indeed the way he expounds the mysteries and interprets them cannot fail to move his hearers."[166]

A rich affective tone pervades all these mystagogical addresses, much as it did the Lenten ones, but the tonal register is brighter. Chrysostom opened one sermon by comparing the neophytes' robes to bright stars: "Blessed be God! Behold there are stars here on earth too, and they shine forth more brilliantly than those in heaven!"[167] In another talk he modulated from joy to awe: "See how many children this spiritual mother has brought forth suddenly and in a single night! . . . Spiritual child-bearing is such that it needs neither time nor a period of months."[168]

Fourth-century mystagogical catecheses wove together three basic elements: (i) gestures and words drawn from the liturgies of the Vigil, (ii) scriptural themes and images, (iii) analogies drawn from the natural world or the local culture. These elements then received a unique cast depending on (a) local ritual practices, (b) the mystagogue's theological stance and temperament, and (c) the local culture and milieu. Let me illustrate, albeit quite briefly, how these basic elements and individuating threads come together in the works of Cyril, Theodore, and John Chrysostom.

Both Cyril and Theodore used the liturgical rite itself for their sequence of topics. In fact, they traced the rites—bodily gesture, sacramental sign, spoken word—in such detail that, as we saw, one can reconstruct the sequence of their respective liturgies. Cyril's catechesis on the *apotaxis* (the "turning away" from Satan) serves as a good example of his method. First, he had the neophytes recall what they had done during the rite: "You began by entering the

[166] Egeria, *Itinerarium* 47.2 (SC 296:314); trans. Wilkinson, 145–46.

[167] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 3.1 (SC 50:151); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:56.

[168] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 4.1 (SC 50:182–83); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:66.

outer room of the baptistery. You faced westward, heard a voice commanding you to stretch out your hand, and renounced Satan as though to his face."[169] Cyril then set the gesture within the drama of salvation history. He retold the Exodus story, accenting how the Jewish people had suffered under Pharaoh, "that most savage and cruel Tyrant." He then shifted "from past to present, from symbol to reality": in the old dispensation Moses was sent by God to lead his "afflicted" people out of Egypt; in the new, "Christ came to deliver the people of the world who were overcome by sin"; in the old dispensation Pharaoh "was submerged in the sea"; in the new, Satan "disappears in the water of salvation." Cyril then explained the liturgical gesture: "I will tell you now, for you need to know, why you faced westward. The west is the quarter from which darkness appears to us; now the devil is darkness, and wields his power in darkness. So we look to the west as a symbolic gesture, and renounce the leader of shadow and darkness."[170] Cyril here combines natural symbol (west as the place of darkness), bodily gesture (facing west), spoken word (formula of renunciation), and biblical story (Exodus, the Christ event). Together these unfold and illuminate the neophytes' conversion: their bodies turning from west to east mirrors an interior turn; their words of renunciation annul their previous "covenant" with Satan; the gesture and words derive their power and meaning from salvation history.[171] Because Cyril spoke in the very places where these events took place, his words had added poignancy.

Theodore's method was similar, but his theological accent was different. Whereas Cyril stressed salvation history enacted in the *present* through liturgical sign, "Theodore's genius" was, as Hugh Riley notes, "to take the same liturgical signs and move them in an

[169] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.2 (SC 126bis:84); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 70. See the analyses in Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 22–25, 35–48, 54–63, 139–42.

[170] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.2-4 (SC 126bis:84–88); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 71.

[171] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogic Catechesis* 1.9 (SC 126bis:98).

arc pointing to the *future*."[172] Theodore gave them an eschatological edge—something we will see repeated in Augustine's mystagogy. For example, Theodore stressed that by the "awe-inspiring" Eucharist "we are led through it to the future reality, because it contains an image of the ineffable economy of Christ our Lord, in which we receive the vision and shadow of the happening that took place."[173]

Chrysostom's mystagogy focused less on liturgical outline and more on moral attitude.[174] He certainly alluded to the rite and used it as a springboard, but he did not walk his hearers through it step by step. Also, the Syrian rite he used differed from the Jerusalem rite. The Syrian rite retained a tradition in which anointing took place *before* baptism. Chrysostom interpreted this not in prophetic terms (as older Syriac sources had), but in athletic metaphors: "the priest anoints you on the forehead and . . . leads you into the spiritual arena as an athlete of Christ."[175] The centerpiece of his mystagogy focused on the neophytes' "gleaming" baptismal robes. Since their robes had "imperial emblems" on them, neophytes had to maintain a "godly conduct and strict discipline." These were, as well, "marriage robes" and were meant to last not only the seven days of the "bridal feast" but for all time. The "gleam" of their robes was to be a light to guide others.[176]

Chrysostom also urged his hearers to imitate biblical neophytes such as the apostle Paul ("Imitate him, I beg you, and you will be able to be called newly baptized not only for 2, 3, 10 or 20 days, but you shall deserve this greeting after 10, 20, or 30 years").[177]

[172] Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 454. See also Thomas Finn, "Baptismal Death and Resurrection: A Study in Fourth Century Eastern Baptismal Theology," *Worship* 43 (1969): 175–89.

[173] Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 15.24 (Tonneau, 500–503); trans. Mingana, WS 6:85.

[174] Riley, *Christian Initiation*, 266–71.

[175] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 2.23 (SC 50:146–47); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:52.

[176] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 4.18, 6.24 (SC 50:192, 227); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:73, 102–3.

[177] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 4.7-10, 7.28 (SC 50:186–88, 243–44); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:68–70, 116–17.

Chrysostom drew especially on images from the local culture to illustrate his points. In one talk he took up a wrestling image and, with a characteristic twist, showed how wrestling contests in the spiritual arena differed from those in the athletic: "In the Olympic combats the judge stands impartially aloof from the combatants, favoring neither the one nor the other, but awaiting the outcome. He stands in the middle because his judgment is impartial. But in our combat with the devil, Christ does not stand aloof but is entirely on our side: . . . He anointed us as we went into the combat, but He fettered the devil."[178] Chrysostom insisted that sacraments gave the neophytes new powers. They could now battle in the arena of the everyday with an uncanny moral flair.

In the fourth century, as in the third, neither the rigor of the process nor the quality of catechesis guaranteed results. Thus one finds Chrysostom complaining:

> I see many after baptism living more carelessly than the uninitiated, having nothing that really distinguishes them in their way of life. It's for this reason, you see, that neither in the marketplace nor in church is it possible to figure out who's a member of the faithful and who's an unbeliever unless one happens to be present at the time of the mystery and see the latter dismissed and the faithful staying on—whereas they ought to be distinguished not by where they stand but how they live.[179]

[178] John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction* 3.9 (SC 50:155–56); trans. Harkins, ACW 31:58.

[179] John Chrysostom, *In s. Matthaei evangelium*, Homily 4.14 (PG 57:47–58); author's translation.

CHAPTER 2

Augustine and the Catechumenate in Milan

To walk from one room to another, one has to pass through a doorway, what in Latin is called *limen*, "threshold." Conversion is a liminal experience, the crossing of a threshold, a passage from one space to another.[1] In the fall of 386, Augustine—the one we now know as St. Augustine of Hippo—passed over such a threshold, closing a door behind him. He abandoned his *spes saeculi*, his "worldly hopes," and submitted his resignation as orator for the city of Milan, a position that had, for two years, enabled him to rub shoulders with the most powerful people in the Roman Empire. That resignation signaled an ending that was a beginning, a change of career, a change of venue, a change of heart.

Behind that resignation had been a potent conversion experience. The story most think of is that told in *Confessions*, with its famous garden scene—the voice of a child and the reading of Paul, inner light and sudden peace. That is the inside story, a backward glance told some fifteen years after the fact, invested with literary elegance and the easy clarities of hindsight. *Confessions* is so powerfully told that it is hard to hear how Augustine first spoke

[1] The term "liminality" was coined by Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) and later popularized by Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," 93–111 in *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970). On this theme in Augustine see Catherine Conybeare, "The Duty of a Teacher: Liminality and *disciplina* in Augustine's *De ordine*," 49–65 in *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to* Confessions, ed. Karla Pollman and Mark Vessey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

of his conversion, his liminal experience. We have early accounts, penned in the months close to the event. While they lack much (though not all) narrative detail, they breathe fervor, fresh from discovery, an air of breakthrough. In his very earliest publication, *Against the Academics* (*Contra Academicos*), Augustine wrote to a wealthy hometown friend of his, Romanianus, and recounted what had turned his life upside down, how reading "certain books" had been like sprinkling "precious perfume" on a "flickering flame," how "they suddenly sparked in me this wildfire":

> Steadily, I started turning inward, quickly, totally, towards myself. And I looked back—I confess it—as though from a journey's end, back to that religion which had been implanted in us in our childhood, and which had been, as it were, woven into our bone's marrow. That religion was drawing me to herself, although I didn't know it. Staggering, hurrying, hesitating, I seized the Apostle Paul. For truly those men, I have to say, could never have accomplished such great things and could never have lived the way they clearly did if their writings and their principles were opposed to so great a good as this. I read the whole book with the greatest care and attention. Then philosophy's face, however dim its rays of light before then, revealed itself to me so greatly.[2]

A perfume-ignited wildfire; an inward turn that turns at journey's end back to a journey's beginning; an ending already there from the beginning, woven into the very marrow of one's bones. His words are images in collision, abstractions strangely concrete. And through it all, a breathlessness. Whatever happened, he didn't do it. It was done to him. It begins with an inward turn and ends with outer words from the Bible, from the apostle Paul. Paul's words and Paul's life, in turn, reveal a philosophy that has a face. This is conversion in all its dizzying immediacy and ambiguity.

[2] *Acad.* 2.2.4–2.6 (CCL 29:20–21); author's translation, from *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 46 (hereafter abbreviated as *AOW*).

This experience marked Augustine's definitive conversion to Christianity, to a philosophically sophisticated form of Christianity. For him philosophy was no academic discipline. He understood it in its etymological sense, a "love of wisdom."[3] This conversion to a Christian wisdom meant a sharp break with career, with marriage, with fame, and the embrace of an anonymous, arduous life. It demanded nothing less than everything. This was a liminal moment—and he knew it. He spoke at the time of its discomfiture and ambiguity: "Many persons are suddenly converted to a good and admirable way of life, but until they become noteworthy by some outstanding deeds, they are still believed to be what they used to be."[4]

In the last chapter I assembled a mosaic of fragments from the third- and fourth-century catechumenate to serve as a broad backdrop for viewing Augustine's work in North Africa. This chapter brings that backdrop into sharper focus. Here I concentrate on a single candidate (Augustine) and a single catechumenate: Milan. I will not try to trace out a full portrait of Augustine's conversion. Its many, intricate strands have been amply and skillfully explored by recent biographers and, of course, by Augustine himself.[5] My prime focus here is less on Augustine the convert and more on Augustine the catechumen. So I will pass lightly over certain

[3] *Acad.* 2.3.7 (CCL 29:21); author's translation. Cf. *ord.* 1.11.32; *conf.* 3.4.7. On this see Goulven Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie*, CEASA 149 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1996), 15–24.

[4] *ord.* 2.10.29 (CCL 29:123–24); trans. Robert P. Russell, *St. Augustine: Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*, FOTC 5:307 (modified).

[5] Landmark biographical studies include Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, 2d ed. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968; 1st ed. 1950); John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion*, rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 2001; 1st ed. 1954); Gerald R. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3d ed. (Norwich: Canterbury, 2002; 1st ed. 1963); Gerald R. Bonner, "Augustinus (uita)," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986): 519–50; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; 1st ed. 1968); Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2000); Henry Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

ebbs and flows of his long search for wisdom, one that included spending nearly a decade as a Manichee as well as his excursions into various philosophic currents, and I touch only briefly on that famous scene in the garden in Milan. My core concern is to draw attention to one somewhat neglected strand: the intentional formation he received in the catechumenate in Milan. For this I draw on Augustine's works, especially *Confessions*, as well as the works of his mentor, Ambrose of Milan (d. 397).[6] This will provide us with a horizon against which to chart Augustine's own work as a teacher of catechumens—to highlight in what ways he taught others as he had been taught and in what ways he simply followed his own lights.

AUGUSTINE THE CATECHUMEN

Augustine was initiated into the catechumenate as an infant. As he says in *Confessions*, he was "regularly signed with the cross and given salt even from the womb of my mother."[7] These two rites—a sign of the cross traced on the forehead, a taste of blessed salt—marked his entrance into the catechumenate but were also, as he notes, repeated regularly. These gestures were believed to help ward off attacks from demonic forces. Catechumens received such

[6] *Confessiones* needs to be read with due attention to its intricate literary character. Essentials include Erich Feldman, "Confessiones," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 1134–94; James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Gillian Clark, *Saint Augustine: The Confessions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Kim Paffenroth and Robert Peter Kennedy, eds., *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Paula Fredriksen, "The *Confessions* as Autobiography," 87–98, and Catherine Conybeare, "Reading the *Confessions*," 99–110 in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

[7] *conf.* 1.11.17 (CCL 27:9); trans. Maria Boulding, *The Confessions*, WSA I/1, rev. ed. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 50. Augustine's verbs "*signabar . . . condiebar*" are in the imperfect and imply that the signing with the cross and the giving of salt occurred repeatedly. In *conf.* 6.4.5 (CCL 27:77), Augustine alludes to becoming a catechumen as being "signed with Christ's name in my infancy."

signings and salt as a sort of inoculation—much as children today are inoculated against dangerous and invisible viruses. But ancient Christian parents usually stopped short of having their children baptized. Augustine's mother, Monnica, was typical in this regard and refused to have him baptized even when he fell seriously ill. She worried that her son would inevitably sow his wild oats and had no wish to leave him vulnerable to the rigors of public penance. Augustine, writing of this years later, admitted her sagacity but also looked back with regret: "Many towering waves of temptation seemed to be looming in the period beyond boyhood. My mother already anticipated them and thought it better to risk in them the clay from which I would later be molded than the newformed man himself."[8]

Augustine drifted in those "towering waves" for years. In the early 370s, while studying in Carthage, the college town of North Africa, he indulged in typical student vices: he attended bawdy theater productions, befriended some in a rowdy fraternity nicknamed the "Wreckers," chased women, dabbled in astrology.[9] Such behavior was permitted catechumens. The conventional wisdom was: "Let him be, let him do as he likes, he is not baptized yet."[10] Augustine continued to go to church, though he admits that he was moved less by piety and more by a desire to spy out women.[11] Some time during these years he began living with a woman. She was apparently of a lower class than he, and so marriage was out of the question—perhaps even forbidden by law.[12] But it was a common enough arrangement among social climbers like

[8] *conf.* 1.11.18 (CCL 27:10); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:51–52.

[9] *conf.* 3.1.1-3.3.6 (CCL 27:27–29).

[10] Quoted in *conf.* 1.9.18 (CCL 27:10); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:51.

[11] *conf.* 3.3.5 (CCL 27:29).

[12] *conf.* 4.2.2 (CCL 27:40–41). On concubinage in late antiquity see Paul Veyne, ed., *The History of Private Life*, Vol. 1: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), esp. 297–311; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 387–95; Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Charles Munier, "Concubinatus," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 1112–13.

Augustine, at least until one could secure a marriage appropriate to one's social status. The two lived together some fourteen years, and she bore him a son, Adeodatus (the name means "gift from God").

During these same years Augustine abandoned orthodox Christianity and joined an exotic foreign cult, the Manichees. It was a religion that had originated a century earlier in Persia.[13] Mani (216–277), its founder, had been a prophet and visionary who believed himself called to preach a final, definitive revelation, to complete what previous religious founders—Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus—had left incomplete. The religion of Mani owed much to Gnosticism. He claimed to reveal a secret mystical knowledge of God and of the universe, its origin and its destiny. He saw the visible universe as a war-torn frontier land, the front line of a cosmos-wide struggle between the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, and taught an elaborate cosmogony that tried to account for the bleak, fractured state of this present world.[14] Manichean missionaries to the Roman Empire portrayed their religion as an elite form of Christianity and vigorously attacked the Christian mainstream, its teachings, its lifestyle, and its Bible, especially the Old Testament. Much of the drama and philosophical meditation of Augustine's *Confessions* centers on how he wrestles with his former Manichean self, not only asking why he joined the Manichees but also denouncing his old ways of thinking and putting forward pointed objections to various Manichean doctrines. For some nine years he

[13] For an overview see Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Manichaeism," 221–36 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). On Manichaeism as Augustine knew it, see François Decret, *L'Afrique manichéenne (IVe–Ve siècles): Étude historique et doctrinale*, CEASA 74–75 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978); Johannes Van Oort, Otto Wermelinger, and Gregor Wurst, eds., *Augustine and Manicheism in the Latin West*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[14] On Mani's cosmogonic myth see Iain Gardner and Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Introduction," 1–45 in *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

counted himself a "hearer" among the Manichees, much as he had once been a "hearer" among the Catholics.[15]

The attractions of Manicheism were, in part, intellectual.[16] As Augustine once noted, the Manichees "accuse the Catholic Church especially of commanding those who come to her to believe, whereas they boast that they do not impose the yoke of believing on their followers, but open up a fountain of teaching."[17] Claims of a religion-within-the-limits-of-reason-alone proved deeply attractive to a young, brilliant intellectual like Augustine. The young Augustine was also haunted by the question of evil's origin. If, as Christianity asserted, the universe was created by an all-good and all-powerful God, where then does evil come from? Why would an all-good God permit evil's existence to mar his handiwork? The Manichees offered, it seemed, an intellectually satisfying solution. God had not created evil; evil was, in its origin, a separate realm; the world as we know it is due to the Kingdom of Darkness's tragic invasion. Years later, in answering a friend of his who asked him about the origin of evil, Augustine remarked: "You raise a question which sorely perplexed me while I was a young man, one which in my weariness drove me into the company of heretics and resulted in my fall."[18] The Manichees portrayed themselves as "true" Christians, and "the names of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit . . . were never far from their mouths."[19] But their Christ was different from that of orthodox Christianity. Since they

[15] Augustine repeatedly mentions spending "nine years" as a Manichee: *conf.* 3.11.20, 4.1.1, 5.6.10 (CCL 27:38, 40, 61). On this chronology see O'Donnell, 2:297–98.

[16] On this see Henry Chadwick, "The Attractions of Mani," *Compostellanum* 34 (1989), reprinted in his *Heresy and Orthodoxy in the Early Church* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1991), 203–22. For perspectives on how Augustine would have looked to his Manichean colleagues see Jason D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, vol. 1: *Conversion and Apostasy, 373–383 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[17] *util. cred.* 9.21 (CSEL 25.1:26); author's translation.

[18] *lib. arb.* 1.2.4 (CCL 29:213); trans. Robert Russell, *St. Augustine: Free Choice of the Will*, FOTC 59 (1968), 75.

[19] *conf.* 3.6.10 (CCL 27:31); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:80–81.

considered the material universe evil, they denied that Christ had really taken flesh. Augustine says that "I was therefore afraid to believe in One who was born in the flesh, lest I should be forced to believe him defiled by the flesh."[20] As a Manichee, Augustine held that God was a vast mass of light and that Christ was a light-being who had emanated from God's light-being; while the Manichean Christ appeared to be human, that was simply an appearance, a guise. These three issues—faith and reason, the origin of evil, the reality of the Incarnation—would be urgent ones he later grappled with as a catechumen.

The young Augustine made his living as a teacher of rhetoric, first in his home town of Thagaste (374–375), then in Carthage (376–383), and eventually in Rome (383). The skills he taught were highly valued. Rhetoric was considered a prerequisite for those who sought fame and fortune in business or law or politics.[21] According to the proverbial view, "This is where words are learned, where eloquence is mastered—things most necessary for crafting arguments and winning verdicts."[22] Not only was public speaking a highly cultivated art form in those days; it was also popular entertainment. People went to hear great rhetors with an enthusiasm not unlike what many today bring to concert going, and ancient audiences were as appreciative of the subtleties of rhetorical style and phrasing as hearers today are of a concert pianist's virtuoso technique or a guitarist's improvisational runs. Augustine won prizes for oratory, first as a student, then later in a competition in Carthage where a powerful proconsul crowned him victor.[23] While in Rome he won an even more significant competition. He was chosen for a government-sponsored professorship of rhetoric for

[20] *conf.* 5.10.20 (CCL 27:69); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:129.

[21] The classic study of Augustine's rhetorical education is by Henri Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 4th ed. (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 1958). For recent perspectives, see Erik Gunderson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); William Dominik and Jon Hall, eds., *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[22] *conf.* 1.16.26 (CCL 27:14); author's translation.

[23] *conf.* 4.3.5 (CCL 27:42).

the city of Milan. Since Milan was the seat of the imperial court, this appointment meant Augustine would move among the empire's elite. He received this appointment from Symmachus, the pagan cousin and political rival of Ambrose.[24] He was only thirty years old and stood at the very pinnacle of his profession.

In *Confessions*, Augustine underplays this dramatic turn in his career and says instead: "So I came to Milan and to Bishop Ambrose, who was known throughout the world as one of the best of men."[25] That was how he viewed this pivotal moment years later, seeing his journey from the point of view of a Christian convert and bishop. But that would not have been his view at the time. He was still a Manichee, though a disgruntled one, and had come to Milan as a protégé of the pagan Symmachus. As a matter of courtesy he paid a visit to Ambrose, one of the city's preeminent and most powerful figures. To his surprise, he was warmly received: "This man of God welcomed me with fatherly kindness and showed the charitable concern for my pilgrimage that befitted a bishop. I began to feel affection for him, not at first as a teacher of truth—for I had given up hope of finding that in your Church—but simply as a man who was kind to me."[26]

[24] *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27:70). Symmachus may have chosen Augustine precisely because he knew him to be a member of an anti-Catholic religious group. In the politics of the empire's upper echelon the choice could have been construed as a snub of Ambrose, who had famously blocked Symmachus's attempt to restore public funding of pagan cults. See Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions*, 78–87; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 59–60; T. D. Barnes, "Augustine, Symmachus, and Ambrose," 7–14 in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992).

[25] *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27:70); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:131. On Ambrose see F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935); Goulven Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1974); Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[26] *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27:70); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:131 (modified).

After this initial meeting Ambrose shaped Augustine through a more public medium: sermons.[27] (The two, in fact, never became close, even after Augustine's baptism.) Augustine says that he went "every Sunday" to liturgies to listen to Ambrose preaching.[28] There he would have mixed in with the baptized, with catechumens, even with pagans. These liturgies could be noisy affairs. "What a job it is," Ambrose used to complain, "to get a little silence when the readings are read!"[29] After the readings Ambrose preached, often at length. The task, he believed, was essential to one who "sat at the helm" and had to "pilot" the church in "stormy seas."[30] After the sermon Augustine, together with all the other unbaptized, would have been dismissed. Only the baptized were permitted to remain for Eucharist, for Ambrose, more than most, deeply respected the tradition of the *disciplina arcani*.[31]

Scholars have expended considerable effort to determine precisely what sermons Augustine may have heard. Pierre Courcelle, in a renowned study, claims that Augustine must have attended Ambrose's *Hexaemeron*, *On Isaac*, and *Death as a Good*.[32] These works do offer intriguing parallels to comments Augustine makes in *Confessions*, but it remains difficult to date these and other of Ambrose's sermons with sufficient precision. But, as John O'Meara pointed out, it is not necessary to determine the *exact* sermons

[27] On this see J. Patout Burns, "Ambrose Preaching to Augustine: The Shaping of Faith," 373–86 in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

[28] *conf.* 6.3.4 (CCL 27:75).

[29] Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmi I*, 9 (CSEL 64:8); author's translation.

[30] Ambrose, *ep.* 2.1 = XXXVI.1 (CSEL 82.2:3), trans. Mary M. Beyenka, *St. Ambrose: Letters*, FOTC 26:76. For Ambrose's letters there is the older numbering system of the Maurists (given here in Arabic numbers) and the more recent one used by the CSEL editors (given in Roman numerals).

[31] Ambrose, *mys.* 55; *De Cain et Abel* 1.37; *Expositio psalmi CXVIII* 2.26-28.

[32] Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions*, 93–138. Courcelle's arguments on dating are part of a larger thesis: that Augustine never went through a "conversion to Platonism" (as Prosper Alfaric had famously claimed in the early twentieth century). Instead, Augustine found in Ambrose's sermons a ready-made synthesis of Christianity and Neoplatonism. On the scholarly reception of Courcelle's arguments see Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie*, 13–17.

"since almost any of Ambrose's explanations of the Old Testament would illustrate that method of his which so appealed to Augustine."[33]

Augustine says that he first came to listen to Ambrose for professional reasons:

> I used enthusiastically to listen to him preaching to the people, not with the intention which I ought to have had, but as if testing out his oratorical skill to see whether it merited the reputation it enjoyed or whether his fluency was better or inferior than it was reported to be. I hung on his diction in rapt attention, but remained bored and contemptuous of the subject-matter. My pleasure was in the charm of his language.[34]

Ambrose consciously cultivated a polished style. In a letter to a new bishop he once advised: "Let your sermons be flowing, let them be clear and lucid so that by suitable disputation you may pour sweetness into the ears of the people."[35] The sweet flow of Ambrose's own sermons affected Augustine in ways he could not have foreseen: "I did not bother to take to heart *what* Ambrose was saying, but was interested only in listening to *how* he said it. . . . Nonetheless, as his words, which I enjoyed, penetrated my mind, the substance, which I overlooked, seeped in with them, for I could not separate the two. As I opened my heart to appreciate how skillfully he spoke, the recognition that he was speaking the truth crept in at the same time, though only by slow degrees."[36]

Ambrose's rhetorical skills were impressive. In the *Hexaemeron* he catalogued the marvels of creation with the eye and ear of a poet: "the surging white caps" and "rhythmic wave-beats" of the ocean; "the islands which adorn the seas like jeweled necklaces";

[33] O'Meara, *The Young Augustine*, 2d ed., 112.

[34] *conf.* 5.13.23 (CCL 27:70–71); trans. Henry Chadwick, *Saint Augustine: Confessions*, Oxford World Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88.

[35] Ambrose, *ep.* 2.5 = XXXVI.5 (CSEL 82.2:5); trans. Beyenka, FOTC 26:78.

[36] *conf.* 5.13.24 (CCL 27:71); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:131–32.

the tricks crabs play to hunt oysters.[37] He sometimes displayed a prophetic side and fiercely denounced the callous consciences of the wealthy:

> Are you uplifted by spacious halls? They should instead arouse compunction because, although [your halls] might hold a crowd, they exclude the voice of the poor. . . . You clothe your walls, but you strip human beings. A naked man cries out in front of your house and you ignore him; a naked man cries out and you are worried about what marble you should use on your floor. . . . A man begs for bread, and your horse champs on the gold [bit] under his teeth. . . . The people are starving, and you close up your granaries. The people are wailing, and you twist your jeweled ring. Unhappy man, in whose power it lies to save the lives of so many from death, and there is no will to do so! The stone in your ring could save the life of an entire people.[38]

What impressed Augustine, however, were different matters. First, he was struck by Ambrose's learned manner. Ambrose, unlike Augustine, read Greek fluently. Thus, as Peter Brown has noted, Ambrose "could comb the books of a brilliant new generation of Greek bishops and a whole tradition of Greek Christian scholarship, to give his congregation some of the most learned and up-to-date sermons in the Latin world."[39] Ambrose used to rummage through the sermons of Origen (d. 254), the great Alexandrian biblical scholar, as well as those of the Cappadocians, mining them for materials, sometimes translating, sometimes paraphrasing, sometimes expanding, sometimes condensing. This was not, as some scholars have charged, a lack of creativity. Ambrose, rather, was what all good teachers are, a creative and

[37] Ambrose, *Exaemeron* 3.5.21, 3.5.23, 5.8.22 (CSEL 32.1:73, 74, 156-157); trans. John J. Savage, *Saint Ambrose: Hexameron*, FOTC 42:73–74, 177.

[38] Ambrose, *De Nabuthe Iezraelita* 13.56 (CSEL 32.2:500–1); trans. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF, 136. On Ambrose as social critic, see Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 135–47.

[39] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 74.

discriminating popularist, and he worked to keep hearers abreast of the best theological scholarship he knew. The key word here is "discriminating": whatever he passed on, he carefully tested and filtered through his own careful readings of the Scriptures.

Second, Augustine was intrigued by Ambrose's methods for interpreting the Bible.[40] As a young North African Christian, Augustine had only been exposed to a narrow literalism. When, as a teenager, he encountered the Manichees and their fierce polemic against the Old Testament, he came to recognize the philosophic blunders that such literalism led to. Ambrose's methods proved a potent antidote to Manichean objections. Ambrose read the Bible, especially an array of thorny Old Testament passages, symbolically, allegorically, teasing out "a spiritual sense" from texts that, as Augustine notes, had been "death to me when I was taking them literally."[41] The cumulative effect of this catechesis was formidable:

> Every Sunday I listened to him "straightforwardly expounding the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15) to the people, and as I listened, I became more and more convinced that it was possible to unravel all those cunning knots of calumny in which the sacred books had been entangled by [Manichean] tricksters who had deceived me and others. . . . I was delighted to hear Ambrose often asserting in his sermons to the people, as an [exegetical] principle on which he insisted emphatically, "The letter is death-dealing, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6). This he would tell them as he drew aside the veil of mystery and opened to them the spiritual meaning of passages which, taken literally, would seem to mislead. He said nothing which offended me, even though I still did not know whether what he said was true.[42]

[40] See Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 23–42; Roland J. Teske, "Augustine, the Manichees and the Bible," in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. Pamela Bright (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 208–21.

[41] *conf.* 5.14.24 (CCL 27:71); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:132.

[42] *conf.* 6.3.4-6.4.6 (CCL 27:76–77); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:138–40 (modified). In *De utilitate credendi* 8.20, an autobiographical account of his conversion written right after his ordination around 391, Augustine also singles out Ambrose's exegesis of the Old Testament as a critical factor.

Ambrose drew on the allegorical methods and interpretations of Origen (and the Jewish scholar Philo) and used them for a combination of theological, apologetic, and pedagogical reasons.[43] Like Origen, he took care to reinterpret passages that portrayed God in anthropomorphic terms or described morally reprehensible behavior among the patriarchs. Like Origen, he used allegory to safeguard the unity of the testaments while at the same time insisting that the Old Testament was a type that foreshadowed Christ and the church. Ambrose actually preferred preaching on the Old Testament, partly because it posed difficulties for his hearers, partly because the better commentaries at his disposal treated Old Testament books, and partly because the hidden meanings uncovered by allegorical lenses delighted both him and his hearers. Generally he gave his sermons in series focused on Old Testament figures: Job, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David. In his hands they appeared, as Peter Brown has noted, like "a stately procession of authentic 'philosophers,' each one symbolizing the state of a soul purified by wisdom."[44]

Ambrose distinguished three levels of meaning: "All of sacred Scripture is either natural or moral or mystical."[45] By "natural" he meant a passage's literal meaning; by "moral," its import for daily life; by "mystical," its foreshadowing of the "mysteries" of salvation (Christ, the coming Kingdom, the church). Sometimes in explaining passages he used to modulate rapidly between

[43] On Origen's allegorical methods see Henri Crouzel, *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 61–84; Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), esp. 120–28 and 172–200; Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[44] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 74. For a detailed study see J. Warren Smith, *Christian Grace and Pagan Virtue: The Theological Foundation of Ambrose's Ethics*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Marcia L. Colish, *Ambrose's Patriarchs: Ethics for the Common Man* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). Ambrose's *De interpellatione Job et David* is rather unusual in its pairing of patriarchs, creating a sort of diptych.

[45] Ambrose, *Explanatio psalmi XXXVI* 1 (CSEL 64:70); author's translation.

various layers.[46] For Ambrose the scriptural word was polyphonic, a cluster of hidden voices and subtle counterpoint. As interpreter, his task was to draw these out, much as a musicologist might do. Ambrose presumed that every word, every detail, no matter how trivial it seemed, held religious and moral significance. He often focused on the symbolism of numbers or the etymology of names, a practice that Augustine would later imitate to great effect. Beneath this was Ambrose's sense that the scriptural word—God's word incarnated in human speech—had untold depths and astonishing density: "Holy Scripture is a sea which has within it profound meanings and the mysterious depths of the Prophets. Into this sea many rivers have entered. Delightful and clear are these streams; these fountains are cool, springing up into life everlasting; there, too, are pleasant words, like honeycomb, and courteous conversation which water souls with the sweetness of moral commands."[47] Ambrose's awe for the enigmas of Scripture rubbed off on Augustine, who would make this a mainstay of his own catechesis.

There was one other feature of Ambrose's preaching that impressed Augustine: its sophisticated metaphysics. In one of his earliest works, *On the Happy Life* (*De beata uita*), Augustine wrote to Manlius Theodorus, a Platonist philosopher he had met in Milan: "I have noticed frequently in the sermons of our bishop . . . that when speaking of God, no one should think of Him as something corporeal; nor yet of the soul, for of all things the soul is nearest to God."[48] Ambrose may have absorbed this Platonist strain indirectly from Christian sources such as Origen or the Cappadocians. At some point in his career (exactly when is a matter of dispute), he appropriated the thought of two pagan Platonists: Plotinus (d. 270) and his disciple Porphyry of Tyre (d. 305).[49] Their *Neo*platonism, as

[46] For example, Ambrose, *De Isaac uel anima* 4.23-31.

[47] Ambrose, *ep.* 2.3 = XXXVI.3 (CSEL 32.4-5); trans. Beyenka, FOTC 26:77–78.

[48] *De beata uita* 1.4 (CCL 29:67); trans. Ludwig Schopp, *Saint Augustine: On the Happy Life*, FOTC 5:47–48.

[49] On Neoplatonism see Pierre Hadot, *Plotinus, or the Simplicity of Vision*, trans. Michael Chase (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge

we now call it, offered fresh new ways of conceiving God, the soul, eternity, beauty, and much else. Ambrose, in his sermons, treated their works the same way he treated his Christian sources: sometimes lifting whole passages from them, other times subtly altering them.[50] Neoplatonic views on the incorporeality of the soul—the very point Augustine alludes to in the quotation above—offered Ambrose a potent rejoinder to Manichean attacks on Christianity. The Manichees used to poke fun at what they saw as the crude Christian conception of God, claiming that since Christians believed that human beings were "made in the image and likeness" of God (Gen 1:26), they therefore accepted that God, like human beings, had a body. As a young man Augustine had found this a formidable argument against mainstream Christianity. Ambrose was conscious of Manichean polemics and repeatedly insisted that Christians held no such view: that the Genesis passage had to be read symbolically; that it was the utterly incorporeal soul, not the body, that was made in God's image and likeness.[51] Ambrose's counterargument had its intended effect, for Augustine admitted how surprised he was to find that Christians "did not entertain infantile nonsense . . . that would seem to confine" God "on every side after the manner of human bodies."[52]

Initially these sermons moved Augustine in small but significant ways. First, he resolved to sever ties with the Manichees. Second, he decided to adopt an intellectual watch-and-see attitude—suspending himself in a skeptical middle-ground between

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University Press, 1996). Ambrose could well have been introduced to these through his mentor (and eventual successor) Simplicianus (d. 400). On him see below.

[50] Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions*, 106–20, demonstrates Ambrose's dependence on Plotinus. The question remains how Ambrose got access to Plotinian ideas and also why Ambrose remained so critical of philosophy. On these issues see Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie*.

[51] Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions*, 98–103, unearths examples of this polemic; e.g., Ambrose, in *Exaemeron* III.32, explicitly cites Manichees and their objections; in *Exaemeron* VI.40-46 he gives a lengthy commentary on Gen 1:26, detailing precisely the points that so struck Augustine.

[52] *conf.* 6.4.5 (CCL 27:77); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:139. Cf. *conf.* 6.11.18.

belief and disbelief after the fashion of Cicero and the so-called "Academics."[53] Finally Augustine "resolved to live as a catechumen in the catholic Church . . . until some kind of certainty dawned by which I might direct my steps aright."[54] The moment has been insufficiently appreciated. This decision—and not the later, more famous garden scene—was *the* moment of Augustine's conversion in the strictest sense. In that era catechumens were recognized publicly and canonically as Christians; they "already belong to the great household" of the church, as Augustine would later put it.[55] Thus Augustine the returning catechumen was once again—and definitively—a Christian. And central to this decisive turnabout in Augustine's self-understanding was Ambrose's astute pedagogy and perspicacious sensitivities as a teacher.

Augustine remained an ambitious man: "I was hankering after honors, wealth, and marriage."[56] He knew that he was on the cusp of enormous success: "I have lots of influential friends; even if nothing else, with a little pressure, I may expect to be given a [provincial] governorship."[57] Meanwhile, his mother had arrived and begun playing matchmaker. She soon secured her talented son an acceptable marriage prospect, a wealthy Catholic heiress who would bring him a good dowry.[58] This meant that the lower-class

[53] *conf.* 5.14.25 (CCL 27:72). This skepticism served as a critical, though passing, stage in his intellectual journey. Augustine was familiar with the radical skepticism of the "Academics," that is, the successors of Plato, through his reading of Cicero. On this side of Cicero see J. G. F. Powell, ed., *Cicero the Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Malcolm Scofield, "Writing Philosophy," 73–87 in *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*, ed. Catherine Steel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Augustine's first treatise, *Against the Academics* (*Contra Academicos*), composed in Cassiciacum in the fall of 386 prior to his baptism, took up the issue. See John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 41–91.

[54] *conf.* 5.14.25 (CCL 27:72); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:133. Cf. *util. cred.* 8.20.

[55] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112): "*iam de domo magna sunt*."

[56] *conf.* 6.6.9 (CCL 27:79); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:142.

[57] *conf.* 6.11.19 (CCL 27:87); author's translation.

[58] *conf.* 6.13.23 (CCL 27:89).

woman he had been living with had to be dismissed.[59] Augustine the catechumen must have appeared to Ambrose as a political opportunist, exactly the sort he denounced in no uncertain terms: "Many, for the sake of having a wife, have faked faith for a time, but are shown to have denied inside what they confessed outside. . . . [And] here comes one to Church looking for honors under the Christian emperors; with a counterfeit reverence he feigns requesting [baptism]; he bows, he prostrates himself, but has not bent the knee of his heart."[60]

Augustine may have heard such denunciations. He also probably heard Ambrose's exhortations to catechumens. Like the Cappadocians, he used the feast of Epiphany as the occasion to get them to turn in their names. His campaigns did not always meet with success. Once, soon after Epiphany, he noted that the apostles had once spent a whole night fishing and, despite their work, had come up empty-handed. His own recent "fishing" expedition had been a similar failure: "No one has given in his name; it is still night for me. I cast the net of the word at Epiphany, but I have caught nothing."[61] Could Augustine have been roused by such calls? Perhaps—for one finds him at a crucial juncture meditating on his delays: "Time was passing by. I kept delaying turning to the Lord and postponed from day to day finding [God]—though I did not postpone the fact that every day I was dying within myself."[62]

Augustine's movement from a politic catechumen to a catechumen-in-earnest was slow. The factors, as he records

[59] *conf.* 6.15.25 (CCL 27:90). See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 79–81, who traces out the broader social context and notes how unusual it was that Augustine speaks of the pain of the breakup. Ambrose, *De Abraham* I.3, offers some harsh judgments on such affairs between social unequals. Augustine held more lenient views. In *b. coniug.* 5.5 he allows that such living together can constitute a legitimate marriage if the couples are faithful; in *f. et op.* 35 he allows a woman dismissed by her lover to be a suitable candidate for baptism.

[60] Ambrose, *Expositio psalmi CXLVIII*, s. 20.48-49 (CSEL 32:469); author's translation.

[61] Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* 4.76 (SC 45:181); author's translation.

[62] *conf.* 6.11.20 (CCL 27:87); author's translation.

them and as his biographers show, were varied and complex. They included conversations with friends, pressure from his mother, a weariness with teaching and with the onerous obligations that came with cultivating political patrons, his discovery of books on Neoplatonic philosophy, a fresh reading of the letters of St. Paul, ongoing interior reflections on matters both philosophical and practical, even a potent contemplative experience.[63] These factors, so essential to his conversion, subtly mixed with and filtered the formation he, as a catechumen, was slowly gaining from Ambrose's sermons. The routine catechesis he was receiving, while crucial, was thus one strand among many.

At this juncture Augustine received a potent catechetical lesson. It came not from a public sermon by Ambrose, but rather from a private interview with Simplicianus (d. 400), an elderly presbyter whom Ambrose revered as his "spiritual father."[64] To Simplicianus, Augustine laid bare the driftings of his spiritual journey. In the course of their conversation Augustine mentioned reading Neoplatonic treatises translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus (d. 364).[65] Simplicianus seized on this. He explained that he had known Victorinus personally and had played a role in his conversion to Christianity:

> The story as Simplicianus told it to me was this. Victorinus was in the habit of reading holy scripture and intensively studying all the Christian writings, which he subjected to close scrutiny; and he would say to Simplicianus, not openly but in private, intimate conversation: "I am already a Christian, you know." But [Simplicianus]

[63] *conf.* 6.11.18-20; 7.9.13-7.17.23; 7.21.27. On Augustine's religious experience described in *Confessions*, book 7, see John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Kenney demonstrates how decidedly un-Platonic Augustine's views are, despite his borrowings of Plotinian language.

[64] *conf.* 8.1.1-2.3 (CCL 27:113–15).

[65] See Pierre Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres*, CEASA 44 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1971); Stephen A. Cooper, *Marius Victorinus' Commentary on Galatians*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

> replied, "I will not believe that, nor count you among Christians, until I see you in Christ's Church." Victorinus coyly replied: "So it's the walls that make Christians, then?" He would often talk like this, claiming that he was a Christian. Simplicianus often responded in the same way, and Victorinus would frequently repeat his joke about walls.[66]

One day Victorinus became frightened that since he had not been a public Christian, Christ would not recognize him at the Last Judgment. So he approached his friend Simplicianus and decided to go public. He was "instructed in the first mysteries of the faith" and "gave in his name to be reborn through baptism." The climax of the story as Augustine recounts it was Victorinus's formal profession of faith at the rite of the *redditio symboli*, or "handing back the Creed":

> Eventually the time came for him to make his profession of faith. Custom decrees that those who are approaching [God's] grace in baptism make their profession in the presence of the baptized community of Rome, standing on a raised platform and using a set form of words which had been entrusted to them and committed to memory. Simplicianus told me that Victorinus had been offered by the priests the option of making his statement more privately . . . but that he had chosen rather to proclaim his salvation before the holy company. What he taught in rhetoric was not salvation, he said, yet he had professed that publicly enough. . . . As he climbed up to hand back the Creed they all shouted his name to one another in a clamorous outburst of thanksgiving—everyone who knew him, that is: and was there anyone present who did not? Then in more subdued tones the word passed from joyful mouth to joyful mouth among them all: "Victorinus, Victorinus!" Spontaneous was their shout of delight as they saw him, and spontaneous their attentive silence to hear him. With magnificent confidence he proclaimed the true faith, and all the people longed to clasp him tenderly to their hearts.[67]

[66] *conf.* 8.2.4 (CCL 27:115); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:187 (modified).
[67] *conf.* 8.2.5 (CCL 27:116); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:188–89 (modified).

The story moved Augustine powerfully: "I was fired up to imitate Victorinus; in fact, that was the whole reason that Simplicianus had told it."[68] Simplicianus had chosen his catechetical lesson carefully, for Augustine and Victorinus held much in common: both were Africans; both, rhetoricians; both had come to Italy to earn fame and fortune; and both held powerful public positions. Simplicianus added that Victorinus had retired from public life once the emperor Julian (d. 364) banned Christians from holding such prestigious teaching posts. The moral was clear: throw off delay; profess the Christian faith; remember the Last Judgment; abandon ambition, even at the cost of one's career.

Augustine eventually acted on this advice. In 386 he and his close friend Alypius were spending the summer at a friend's villa, which happened to have a small garden attached to it. There, they were visited by a fellow North African, Ponticianus, a high-ranking government official and a devout Christian. Surprised to find Augustine immersed in reading St. Paul's letters, Ponticianus recounted the story of Antony (d. 356), an Egyptian peasant who, after hearing the gospel story of Jesus and the rich young man, promptly sold all he had and became a hermit in the desert. In time Antony would win an international reputation for his wisdom and be numbered among the pioneers of Christian monasticism.[69] Antony's story, in turn, had recently inspired two imperial officials to follow his lead, abandon their government careers, and become monks. These stories shook Augustine to the core and catalyzed a dramatic conversion experience. In one of the most famous scenes in Western literature, recorded in *Confessions*, Augustine recounts how, after hearing the story of Antony, he complained to Alypius, "What's wrong with us? . . . Unlearned men are rising up and storming heaven, while we, we with all our learning without any heart—

[68] *conf.* 8.5.10 (CCL 27:119); author's translation.

[69] On Antony and early Egyptian monasticism see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 57–104; Columba Stewart, "Anthony of the Desert," 2:1088–1101 in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 2000).

here we are rolling around in flesh and blood!"; how in anguish he withdrew to the nearby garden and threw himself down under a fig tree; "how a profound self-examination had pulled out from the hidden depths and heaped together the whole of my wretchedness before the gaze of my heart . . . bringing a huge downpour of tears"; how suddenly he heard from a nearby house the voice of a child chanting "a sort of sing-song phrase, repeating over and over: 'Pick it up, read it! (*tolle, lege*)' "; how he stemmed the flow of tears, took the words as a divine command "that I should open a book and read the first passage I should find" in imitation of Antony whose conversion had been prompted by the gospel's words, and so went back to the table where his copy of Paul's letters lay and read the first words his eyes lighted upon: 'Not in revelries and drunkenness, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in rivalries and jealousies, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as for the flesh, make no provision for its lusts' (Rom 13:13-14)." "No further did I desire to read," Augustine says, "nor was there any need. Immediately by sentence's end, all darkness of doubt was dispersed, and a light of peace flooded into my heart."[70] In the high drama of this born-again experience it is easy to overlook a crucial detail: the call he heard was to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Augustine knew exactly what that meant: baptism.

AUGUSTINE THE PETITIONER

Soon after this dramatic scene in the garden, Augustine wrote Ambrose and formally petitioned for baptism, "notifying him of my past errors and present intention." In his letter he also sought advice: to find "which [biblical] books in particular I ought to read,

[70] *conf.* 8.7.17-8.12.29 (CCL 27:124–31); author's translation, *AOW*, 25–27. For assessments of the historicity of Augustine's narrative see Aimé Solignac, "Historicité des Confessions," *Les Confessions*, BA 13 (1992): 55–84; John J. O'Meara, "Augustine's *Confessions*: Elements of Fiction," 77–96 in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*; Henry Chadwick, "History and Symbolism in the Garden at Milan," 42–55 in *From Augustine to Eriugena: Essays on Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honor of John O'Meara*, ed. Francis X. Martin and John A. Richmond (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991).

the better to prepare myself for so great a grace and render me more fit to receive it."[71] Ambrose wrote back and suggested the book of Isaiah. It was a misdiagnosis of his advisee's catechetical needs. Augustine found the opening chapters unintelligible and soon laid it aside. Around the same time he officially resigned from his professorship in rhetoric, excusing himself on the grounds of "chest pains" and a respiratory ailment.[72] He spent the autumn of 386 with friends and students on a sort of sabbatical in the small town of Cassiciacum. There he embarked on the beginnings of his literary career, composing philosophical dialogues in the style of Cicero. They show him wrestling with acute issues: the search for happiness, the existence of God, the nature of the soul, the origin of evil, the limits of self-knowledge, the possibility of discovering truth in an uncertain world.[73]

In *Confessions*, Augustine touches only briefly on his final preparation for baptism: "The time arrived for me to give in my name for baptism, so we left the country and moved back to Milan." His friend Alypius decided to join him, as did his fifteen-year-old son Adeodatus: "We included him in the group as our contemporary in the life of your grace [O God], to be schooled along with us in your course of learning."[74] Augustine makes no mention in *Confessions* of what this "schooling" involved. But in an early work, *On the Greatness of the Soul* (*De animae quantitate*), he remembers and can quote word for word essentials that Ambrose taught of the Christian doctrine of God and of right worship:

[71] *conf.* 9.5.13 (CCL 27:140); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:218.

[72] Augustine refers to it repeatedly: *beata u.* 1.4; *Acad.* 1.1.3, 3.7.15; *ord.* 1.2.5; *conf.* 9.5.13.

[73] On the Cassiciacum dialogues see Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Joanne McWilliam, "The Cassiciacum Autobiography," *Studia Patristica* 18/4 (1990): 14–43.

[74] *conf.* 9.6.14 (CCL 27:141); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:219 (modified). Boulding translates *disciplina* as "doctrine." Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 83, has noted: "For [Augustine] the biblical story of salvation is a great school for the soul, wherein love forms the *disciplina*, or 'course of learning.'" Augustine uses *disciplina* here to speak not of a course in "doctrine" per se but rather an immersion in the biblical story of salvation whose learning was medicinal in its outcome.

> It has been the divinely inspired and categorical teaching of the Catholic Church that no creature is to be adored by the soul (I prefer to use the very words by which these things were taught to me), but that He alone is to be adored who is the Creator of all things that are, from whom all things come, by whom all things are made, in whom all things exist.[75]

Augustine seems to be quoting Ambrose's instruction on the creed, and he was able, probably because of its rhythmic parallelism, to memorize the phrase. Years later he looked back on the high-pitched excitement he felt: "Have we so forgotten ourselves that we do not even recall how anxiously we applied ourselves when our catechists were telling us what we had to do, at the time when we were applying for the sacraments of that font and for that reason were even called 'petitioners' (*competentes*)?"[76]

To learn more about the Lenten training in Milan we must turn to other sources. According to Ambrose's deacon and biographer Paulinus, Ambrose personally handled the instruction of the *competentes*.[77] These instructions were part of a worship service that also included readings and psalms and was held twice daily, Monday through Friday, at the third and ninth hours.[78] Ambrose, unlike Cyril and Theodore, did not use the creed as his Lenten syllabus. In fact, he gave only a single instruction on it, as we will see in a moment. Instead he used the same curriculum he used on Sundays: sermons, often in series, focused on exemplary Old Testament figures or books.[79] Ambrose once explained to his neophytes the rationale that guided his Lenten pedagogy:

[75] *an. quant.* 34.77 (CSEL 39.1.4:224); trans. Joseph M. Colleran, *St. Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul*, ACW 9:106.

[76] *f. et op.* 6.9 (CSEL 41:44); trans. Ray Kearney, *On Christian Belief*, WSA I/8:231 (modified).

[77] Paulinus of Milan, *Vita sancti Ambrosii* 38.

[78] Leonel L. Mitchell, "Ambrosian Baptismal Rites," *Studia Liturgica* 1 (1962): 242.

[79] On Ambrose's Lenten catechesis see Homes Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose* 2:682–83. Ambrose's *De Abraham* (book I only), *De Helia et ieiunio*, and *Explanatio psalmi XXXVI–XL* are three extant examples. See below.

> Every day, after the deeds of the patriarchs or the precepts of the Book of Proverbs were read, we preached a sermon on virtuous behavior so that you might be educated and instructed by these things and grow accustomed to treading the paths of our forebears, cleaving to their way and obeying the divine oracles. Thus, having been renewed by baptism, you would hold fast to the style of life that befits those who have been washed clean.[80]

Ambrose thus saw Lent as a time for moral education, for learning and living out the essentials of Christian virtue. He was, of course, concerned that the *competentes* have orthodox doctrinal views, but that was not his focus, at least not as much as it was for his Greek contemporaries. He recognized that, in order to learn to live this way of life, *competentes* needed two things: models to imitate and moral principles to guide decisions. For both, Ambrose turned to the Scriptures: the patriarchs provided the models while Proverbs provided the principles. And both could be given in an easy-to-remember medium: story (the patriarchs) and aphorism (Proverbs).

To get a taste of this, let us explore Ambrose's *On Elijah and Fasting* (*De Helia et ieiunio*). This sermon (or sermons) was delivered at the beginning of Lent, some time between 387 and 390 (meaning that Augustine may actually have heard it). On this occasion Ambrose inaugurated Lent by exhorting the whole assembly—faithful, catechumens, and *competentes*—to adopt a proper fast. He set out the prophet Elijah as a model of true fasting and listed benefits Elijah enjoyed from his forty-day fast and that, by implication, his hearers, especially the *competentes*, would also enjoy: Elijah "raised the widow's son from the dead" (just as the *competentes* would rise from the dead at baptism); "he drew down fire from heaven" (just as the *competentes* would draw down the fire of the Spirit); "while fasting he was snatched in a chariot to heaven and . . . gained the presence of God" (just as the *competentes* would be swept, after baptism, into the presence of heavenly mysteries).[81]

[80] Ambrose, *mys.* 1 (SC 25bis:157); trans. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF, 146.

[81] Ambrose, *De Helia et ieiunio* 2.2 (CSEL 32.2:412–13); trans. Mary Joseph Aloysius Buck, *S. Ambrosii De Helia et ieiunio*, Patristic Studies 19 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1929), 47.

After extolling the benefits of fasting, Ambrose entertained his audience by lampooning the feasting and drinking habits of the Milanese elite. He described, for example, a steward from a wealthy household who frantically combed the markets for the finest wines, oysters, and pheasant; a rich man's kitchen that resembled a slaughterhouse where "a battle was being fought, not a dinner being prepared"; a mock military funeral in which drunken soldiers were carried out on their shields.[82] He then set Christian ideals in stark contrast, quoting Isaiah 58: that one should distribute "bread to the hungry and bring the needy and harborless into your house," that "if you see one naked, cover him."[83] For Ambrose, true fasting was inseparable from doing justice.

At the sermon's close Ambrose spoke directly to the *competentes*. He compared them to wrestlers and insisted that, like all athletes, they needed to follow a rigorous discipline: train daily; adhere to a strict diet; abstain from sex. He admitted the discipline was hard, but he encouraged them to persevere: "When you have come into the wrestling place . . . the heat is severe, but the victory is sweet."[84]

Sometime during Lent, *competentes* in Milan went through an exorcism (or exorcisms), what Ambrose called "the mysteries of the scrutinies." He gives no specifics about the rite other than that it included some sort of physical: "An examination was made so that nothing unclean might still cling to the body of anyone of you. Using exorcism we sought out and brought about a sanctifying not only of your body but also your soul."[85]

On the Sunday before Easter, after the dismissal of the catechumens, Ambrose and the *competentes* retired to the baptistery. There, he personally delivered the creed to them and gave a brief instruction on it.[86] We can glimpse something of what Augustine

[82] Ambrose, *De Helia et ieiunio* 8.24-25, 13.50 (CSEL 32.2:425–26, 440–41).
[83] Ambrose, *De Helia et ieiunio* 10.34 (CSEL 32.2:430–31).
[84] Ambrose, *De Helia et ieiunio* 21.79 (CSEL 32.2:460–61); trans. Buck, 103–5.
[85] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 1 (SC 25bis:46); author's translation.
[86] Ambrose, *ep.* 20.4 = LXXVI.4 (CSEL 82.3:109–10).

would have heard by looking at Ambrose's *Explanation of the Creed* (*Explanatio symboli*), a sermon delivered sometime in the late 380s or early 390s. Ambrose begins by announcing the reason for the ceremony: "It is now the time and the day for us to hand over the creed—a 'symbol' which is a spiritual seal, a 'symbol' which is our heart's meditation and, as it were, an ever-present bodyguard, a treasure within our breast."[87] Here Ambrose touches in rapid succession upon images and themes that run the length of the address: the creed is something precious; it must be interiorized; it guards one against error. Ambrose then used an analogy drawn from fourth-century finance to highlight its significance:

> First we need to explain the terminology. "*Symbolum*" is a Greek word which in Latin means "contribution." People in business speak of *symbola* when they invest money which—when lumped together, so to speak, into a single sum from their individual contributions—is kept whole and untouched [in a common fund in order to guarantee] that no one may try and commit fraud, neither from the money they contributed nor in any of their business dealings. Among such business people there is this custom: that if anyone commits fraud, he is tossed out as a cheat.[88]

This analogy relied on an odd mixing of two Greek terms—*symbolum* ("password") and *symbola* ("contribution")—but it was a widely used pedagogical device.[89] It impressed Augustine, for he later used it to emphasize that the creed committed the *competentes* to a shared venture. Ambrose's accent was more ominous: creedal fraud meant expulsion from the community. This analogy provided the segue to a popular legend, that the creed had been a joint composition of the Twelve: "The holy Apostles gathered as one and made a brief summary of the faith, so that it might always be held in memory and be remembered."[90]

[87] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 1 (SC 25bis:46); author's translation.
[88] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 2 (SC 25bis:46); author's translation.
[89] On this motif see Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 52–61.
[90] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 3 (SC 25bis:48); author's translation.

At this juncture Ambrose asked his hearers to sign themselves with the sign of the cross. He then solemnly recited the creed, first alone, then a second time with the *competentes* joining him, apparently to impress its wording on their memory. In neither instance did the stenographer who recorded this address give the actual wording of the creed, so much was its secrecy respected.[91]

Ambrose then explained the creed of Milan phrase by phrase. He first set out a pro-Nicene view of the Trinity: "In this symbol is articulated with the greatest clarity the divinity of the eternal Trinity—that as regards the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, the venerable Trinity, there is only a single activity. . . . Where there is no distinction in the majesty [of the Three], neither should there be any distinction of faith."[92] Behind these spare comments are a sophisticated theology and a complex politics. The fourth-century church had witnessed acute battles in its slow, fitful search for the Christian doctrine of God: how God can be spoken of as at once one and three. The victory of the Cappadocians and other Greek pro-Nicenes just a few years earlier, at the Council of Constantinople of 381, was still far from secure. Ambrose's episcopal predecessor, Auxentius, had been a leading Homoian (one of the major factions opposed to Nicaea) and would have denied the equality of Father, Son, and Spirit in the way Ambrose asserts here and would have argued, instead, for strong distinctions in the respective activities and the respective majesties of each of the three Persons.[93] Thus in his brief remarks Ambrose took pains to ensure that his *competentes* got their creed—their "password"—right.

[91] See the scribal notes in *Explanatio symboli* 3 (SC 25bis:48).

[92] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 3 (SC 25bis:48); author's translation. On Ambrose's Trinitarian theology see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 262–67. While many scholars have tended to focus on what later centuries saw as the Nicene watchword, "consubstantial" (*homoousios*, *consubstantia*), Ayres demonstrates that in this period pro-Nicenes actually stressed—exactly as Ambrose does here—that the "unity of activity" was the signature of the unity and equality of the divine Persons.

[93] On this see Daniel H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

The address also evidences Ambrose's pedagogy. Playing on the story of the creed's joint composition, he suggested a mnemonic device to aid memorization: "just as there are twelve Apostles, so are there twelve phrases."[94] He then broke down its constituents into three groups of four: (i) Father, Son, incarnation, death/burial; (ii) resurrection, ascension, seating at the right hand, judging the living and dead; (iii) Spirit, church, remission of sins, resurrection of the body.[95]

In closing, Ambrose urged that the *competentes* should continue to recite the Creed daily. He claimed that its power warded off shocks to mind and body and shielded one from demonic temptation.[96] He also asked them not to write it down, but instead to recite it silently so that no catechumen might hear it. Ancients, it is important to remember, generally read and prayed out loud. Ambrose read silently, a habit unusual enough to merit comment by Augustine.[97] Here Ambrose recommended what must have seemed equally surprising: to pray silently.

The cumulative effect of Ambrose's Lenten teaching had begun altering Augustine's views on the relationship of faith and reason. He was savoring that one had to trust the authority of Scripture and the church's teaching on it to make progress into the profound mysteries of God and redemption. In an erudite philosophic dialogue *On Order* (*De ordine*), edited around this very period, Augustine alludes to the cumulative effect of Ambrose's training: "The sacred rituals by which we are being initiated are handing on all these truths to us in a more secret and powerful way; in them the life of the good is cleansed most easily, not by the vagaries of disputations, but by the authority of the mysteries."[98] At the same

[94] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 8 (SC 25bis:56); author's translation.

[95] Ibid. It is difficult to discern precisely how these groups of four break down because the manuscript is rather corrupt at this point.

[96] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 9 (SC 25bis:56–58).

[97] *conf.* 6.3.3 (CCL 27:75).

[98] *ord.* 2.9.27 (BA 4/2:242); trans. Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 117. *De ordine* was originally composed in the fall of 386 when Augustine was still a catechumen, prior to becoming a *competens*; however, he seems to have edited this and the other Cassiciacum dialogues in the months afterward.

time he was beginning to savor the potency of the Incarnation, how Christ's humble self-emptying was what made redemption possible: "Authority should be termed 'divine' which . . . shows humankind how deeply it would abase itself for their sake by becoming a real human being. . . . For it is fitting that divine authority's deeds should teach about its power, that its humility should teach about its compassion, and that its commandments should teach about its nature."[99]

AUGUSTINE THE NEOPHYTE

At the Easter vigil, the night of April 24–25, 387, Augustine was baptized. In *Confessions* he touches on this event only briefly. He mentions nothing of the ceremonial, but only the stirrings of his heart:

> And so we were baptized, and all the anxieties about our past fled from us. During those days I enjoyed an insatiable delight in pondering the awe-inspiring depths of your purposes for the salvation of humankind. How the tears flowed—so deeply was I moved by the gorgeous voices of Your church singing hymns and canticles! Those voices flowed into my ears, and truth was distilled in my heart, and feelings of devotion welled up from it. The tears ran, and it was good for me to experience it.[100]

Scholarly commentators on *Confessions* have sometimes wondered why Augustine says so little about the rites of baptism—unaware, it seems, of the ancient practice of the *disciplina arcani* and of Augustine's deep respect for it.[101] Thus he speaks not of the

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The language here clearly reflects that of the *disciplina arcani* ("sacred rituals," "handing on . . . truths . . . in a more secret . . . way"). While it could be read as Augustine's reaction to mystagogy, the language here seems more aptly suited to the Lenten training.

[99] *ord.* 2.9.27 (BA 4/2:242); trans. Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 117.

[100] *conf.* 9.6.14 (CCL 27:140–41); author's translation.

[101] See Henry Chadwick, "Donatism and the *Confessions* of Augustine," 23–35 in *Philanthropia kai eusebeia: Festscrift für Albrecht Dihle zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Glenn W. Most, Hubert Petersmann, and Adolf M. Ritter (Göttingen:

rites but of the feelings they aroused. He alludes here, obliquely, to the way Ambrose framed the neophytes' new life against the broader biblically inspired vision of a God who searches out and rescues and renews the expanse of humanity from across history and across the globe.

Augustine also speaks of how the music moved him to tears. Ambrose had introduced Eastern-style antiphonal chants into his church's worship, leaving his congregation enthralled by their exotic melodies.[102] His opponents accused him of sorcery, of using music to "bewitch" his congregation. Ambrose acknowledged the music's power but attributed its force to trinitarian lyrics by which "all have become teachers, who were scarcely able to be learners."[103] A year earlier Ambrose had used hymn singing to rally his community to stand firm in a high-stakes crisis. The anti-Nicene empress Justina had sent military forces to seize possession of Ambrose's basilica. The congregation stood its ground, staging a weeklong sit-in protest, and successfully and nonviolently faced down imperial troops. Music had held them together in those dark hours, rousing flagging spirits and reminding them of the fundamental principles on which they were staking their lives, namely, who they understood God to be.[104]

Ambrose's chants haunted Augustine not only at his baptism but long after. The words of one, "God, Creator of All" (*Deus creator omnium*), a Vespers hymn composed by Ambrose himself, welled up in Augustine's memory the night after his mother's death. As he lay sleepless, he suddenly savored its lyrics: "Creator God, O Lord of all, you . . . bid that the night in quietness serve the gracious sway of sleep, that weary limbs, restored to labor's use, may

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Pamela Bright, "En-Spirited Waters: Baptism in the *Confessions* of Augustine," 48–58 in *The Early Church in its Context: Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson*, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe, Frederick W. Norris, and James W. Thompson (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

[102] *conf.* 9.7.15 (CCL 27:141–42).

[103] Ambrose, *Sermo contra Auxentium* 34 (PL 16:1017–18), quoted in Homes Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, 1:294.

[104] *conf.* 9.7.15 (CCL 27:142).

rise again . . . and mourners find release from pain."[105] In retrospect he savored how, at this moment and at his baptism, hymns subtly catechized him. Augustine later followed Ambrose's lead and made music a catechetical tool.

While Augustine himself was silent on the ceremonial, the initiation rites he traversed can be reconstructed, thanks to Ambrose's two mystagogical works, *The Sacraments* (*De sacramentis*) and *The Mysteries* (*De mysteriis*).[106] The first is a series of six sermons delivered during Easter week. These were probably recorded by a shorthand stenographer (*notarius*), who published them without any revision by Ambrose. The second covers the same ground, though Ambrose seems to have reedited this version for public consumption and alludes only obliquely to details of the rites (mainly using scriptural references) to protect ritual secrecy.

The rites as celebrated in Milan took place as follows: In the early hours of Easter, while the baptized kept vigil in the basilica, the bishop and baptismal candidates (as well as other clergy) withdrew to the baptistery.[107] The rite began at the door with the ceremony of "the opening" (*aperitio*). The bishop touched the ears and nose of each candidate, saying, "Be opened," recalling, as Ambrose notes, the Aramaic phrase "*ephphatha*" Jesus had used in healing a

[105] Ambrose, *Deus Creator omnium*, quoted in *conf.* 9.12.32 (CCL 27:151–52); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:233.

[106] On this see Bernard Botte, ed., *Ambroise de Milan: Des sacraments, Des mystères, Explication du Symbole*, SC 25bis (Paris: Cerf, 1994), esp. 8–21, which traces out the debate (and resolution) of the question of the authenticity of *De sacramentis*. These sermons retain all the hallmarks of oral Latin; see Christine Mohrmann, "Le style oral du *De sacramentis* de saint Ambroise," *Vigiliae Christianae* 6 (1952): 168–77.

[107] On the rite in Milan see Mitchell, "Ambrosian Baptismal Rites," 241–53, reprinted in idem, *Worship: Initiation and the Churches* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), 75–89; Edward J. Yarnold, "The Ceremonies of Initiation in the *De Sacramentis* and *De Mysteriis* of St. Ambrose," *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970): 453–63; Cesare Alzati, *Ambrosianum Mysterium: The Church of Milan and Its Liturgical Tradition*, trans. George C. R. Guiver, Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 44 (Nottingham: Grove, 1999); Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 634–40; Robin M. Jensen, "Ancient Baptismal Spaces: Form and Function," *Studia Liturgica* 42 (2012): 108–29.

deaf mute (Mark 7:34).[108] Candidates then entered the baptistery itself, stripped off their clothes, and were anointed by a deacon or presbyter.[109] Next they turned to the west and did a double renunciation. The bishop first asked each candidate: "Do you renounce the devil and his works?" to which he or she responded: "I do renounce them"; the bishop then asked: "Do you renounce the world and its pleasures?" and again the candidate responded: "I do renounce them."[110] The candidate then turned to the east and made a vow to Christ (Ambrose does not give the exact words of this).[111] Afterward, the bishop said a prayer of exorcism over the waters within the font, then blessed them by an invocation that called upon the Trinity.[112] The baptistery of San Giovanni in Milan, whose font dates from Ambrose's time and was likely the very one in which Augustine was baptized, had an eight-sided font over five meters in diameter.[113] After the baptismal waters were consecrated, candidates descended one by one into the font. The formula of baptism was interrogatory, interspersed with immersions:

> You were asked, "Do you believe in God the Father almighty?" You replied: "I believe," and you were immersed . . . You were asked for a second time: "Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and in his cross?" You replied: "I believe," and you were immersed. . . . You were asked a third time: "Do you believe also in the Holy Spirit?" You replied: "I believe," and you were immersed a third time.[114]

[108] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.1.2 (SC 25bis:60).

[109] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.2.4 (SC 25bis:62).

[110] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.2.5 (SC 25bis:62); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 162.

[111] Ambrose, *mys.* 2.7 (SC 25bis:158).

[112] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.5.18-19, 2.5.14 (SC 25bis:70, 80–82). This may have been accompanied by a gesture of the sign of the cross or even the placement of a cross in the water: *mys.* 3.14 (SC 25bis:162): "The priest casts the proclamation of the Lord's cross into this font, and the water becomes sweet unto grace."

[113] For a discussion (and photo) of the font of San Giovanni in Milan, see Jensen, *Living Water*, 195-197.

[114] Ambrose, *sacr.* 2.7.20 (SC 25bis:84–86); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 118. Cf. *sacr.* 3.1.1; *mys.* 5.21. Note the added phrase "in his cross" in the second question. See the discussion below.

Each candidate then came up from the font and was anointed with oil by the bishop.[115] Then, in a rite unique to Milan, the bishop washed each candidate's feet.[116] The newly baptized were then clothed in white robes, and a "spiritual seal" bestowing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit was given. What this "sealing" involved is unclear, whether it included a laying on of hands or a second anointing as was done later in Rome or simply a prayer invoking the gifts of the Spirit.[117] Finally, the newly baptized were led back to the basilica, where they participated in Eucharist for the first time, "to see what you had not seen before."[118]

In the week after Easter, Ambrose gave daily mystagogical sermons that unfurled the meaning of these rites. If the later Ambrosian rite is any indication, these talks were held during a daily Eucharist reserved for the neophytes.[119] Like Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose walked neophytes step by step back through the rites of the Vigil, using their sequence as the outline for his talks.[120] He was a stickler about the discipline of secrecy and insisted that sacraments be discussed only *after* initiation; to speak to the uninitiated about the secret sacraments made one a "betrayer" rather an "explainer."[121] Like Cyril, Ambrose believed that, in matters of mystery, experience must precede explanation. The rites themselves, he claimed, had an inherent pedagogy; an inner "light of the mysteries had poured into you" a spiritual knowledge far more powerful than any verbal exposition.[122] In detailing the rites'

[115] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.1.1 (SC 25bis:90); cf. *mys.* 6.29-30.

[116] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.1.4 (SC 25bis:92–94); cf. *mys.* 6.31-33.

[117] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.2.8-10 (SC 25bis: 96–98). See Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 137–40.

[118] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.2.15 (SC 25bis:100); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 126.

[119] Homes Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, 1:341.

[120] On Ambrose's mystagogy see Christine Mohrmann, "Observations sur le *De sacramentis* et le *De mysteriis* de saint Ambroise," *Ambrosius Episcopus* (Milano: Universitá Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1976), I:103–23; Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching*; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 641–47.

[121] Ambrose, *mys.* 1.2 (SC 25bis:156); trans. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF, 146.

[122] Ibid.

meanings he stressed their inner dynamism, how they served as an array of signs signaling God's invisible actions. For example, he repeated a motif found in Tertullian, the disappointment of candidates on seeing the font, and contrasted visible and invisible: "You came in, you saw the water. . . . Perhaps someone might say: 'Is that all?' Well, yes, this is all—where truly there is complete innocence, where there is all piety, all grace, all holiness. You saw what you were able to see with the body's eyes, with human perception. You didn't see those things that really took place, but only things that were visible. The unseen were much greater than the seen."[123] Ambrose's stress on the invisible allowed him to describe the rites of initiation as an event whose true setting was eternity itself: that angels observed the neophytes approaching the altar and marveled at their sudden splendor and the dazzling whiteness accomplished by the font; that the neophytes themselves had become "eagles delighted by the washing" and were ready to soar heavenward.[124]

Like Cyril, Ambrose decoded the rites' meanings by drawing on biblical precedents and imagery. Ambrose interpreted the unusual Milanese footwashing rite not only as an imitation of the humility demonstrated by Jesus at the Last Supper but also as symbolic of the purging of residual venom left behind by Satan, whose serpent bite had caused Adam to trip and fall.[125] Like Cyril, Ambrose read the baptismal washing typologically, as a harkening back to and a recapitulation of a long sequence of Old Testament events: the Spirit hovering over the waters at creation; the flood at the time of Noah; the Red Sea; Moses sweetening the desert spring; the cure of Naaman the Syrian. As Bernard Botte has noted, the pedagogical effect Ambrose achieved was "not so much a harmonious synthesis as a series of tableaux . . . to be engraved on the memory of the neophytes"; the interplay of images gave "them a rich, living idea of baptism" more vital than any abstract analysis.[126]

[123] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.3.10 (SC 25bis:64–66); author's translation. Cf. *mys.* 3.15, 4.19.

[124] Ambrose, *sacr.* 4.2.5-7 (SC 25bis:104).

[125] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.1.7 (SC 25bis:94–96).

[126] Botte, "Introduction," SC 25bis:36.

Ambrose used this biblical figuration to draw out two points: first, that while "we admire the mysteries of the Jews—they are excellent by reason of their antiquity— . . . the sacraments of the Christians are even more divine and more ancient than those of the Jews."[127] He argued that the waters at creation and the flood at the time of Noah demonstrated the venerable antiquity of Christian baptism, while the sacrifice of Melchisedech (whom he cast as a Christ figure) antedated the sacrifices of Abraham and Moses.[128] This might seem an odd emphasis, but for a conservative society like Rome, Christianity seemed newfangled. Its novelty made it suspect. Christian apologists thus felt compelled to create for Christianity a more ancient lineage. Second, Ambrose held the idiosyncratic theory that biblical precedents were signs rather than sacraments: that is, biblical events exhibited divine power visibly and thus, as signs, they did not require faith; sacraments, by contrast, were signs whose actions were invisible and thus demanded faith.[129]

Ambrose also drew on cultural images. In speaking of the first anointing he invoked sports imagery: "You are anointed as an athlete of Christ, as one slated to compete in the bout that is this world."[130] In speaking of the renunciation of Satan he played off ancient finance and compared the renunciation to a down payment on a loan and warned of the perils of defaulting.[131] His favorite tableau was the marriage feast, and this he joined with sensual images drawn from the biblical Canticle of Canticles: kisses, "breasts . . . better than wine," myrrh and aromatic perfumes, the king's bedchamber that is also a "cellar, the place where the best vintages, the best perfumes, the sweetest honey are stored."[132] Like Chrysostom, Ambrose played on cultural images to show how the spiritual

[127] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.4.11 (SC 25bis:66); author's translation. Cf. *mys.* 8.47.

[128] Ambrose, *mys.* 3.9 (SC 25bis:160). Cf. *sacr.* 1.6.23.

[129] Ambrose, *sacr.* 2.2.4 (SC 25bis:76).

[130] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.2.4 (SC 25bis:62); author's translation.

[131] Ambrose, *sacr.* 1.2.5 (SC 25bis:62).

[132] Ambrose, *sacr.* 5.2.5-11 (SC 25bis:122–24); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 142–43.

world paradoxically inverted the everyday: "You are inebriated in spirit. . . . He who is drunk with wine staggers and totters. He who is drunk with the Spirit is firmly rooted in Christ. This is a splendid drunkenness which brings sobriety of soul."[133] Also like Chrysostom, Ambrose used the rite as a springboard for suggesting an appropriate moral style. Playing on Tertullian's image of Christians as "fish," Ambrose thus defined the Christian attitude to the tumult of the secular world: "Imitate the fish. . . . On the sea the tempest rages, violent winds blow, but the fish swims on. It does not drown because it is used to swimming. In the same way, this world is the sea for you. It has various currents, huge waves, fierce storms. You too must be a fish, so that the waves of this world do not drown you."[134]

Ambrose also highlighted how rites founded doctrine. In Milan the second question asked the neophyte standing naked in the font was: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ *and in his cross*?" This added phrase, "in his cross," was unique to the rite of Milan. Ambrose worried that "in his cross" could be used to deny the equality of the Son with the Father and thus insisted:

> Remember how you responded, that you believe in the Father, that you believe in the Son, that you believe in the Holy Spirit. That is *not* to be understood as: "I believe in a greater, a lesser, and a least." Rather, with the same care that you exercise in your use of words you are constrained to believe in the Son just as you believe in the Father and to believe in the Spirit just as you believe in the Son. The sole difference consists in this—that you said that you must believe in the cross of Jesus, our only Lord.[135]

Ambrose here stresses the equality of the three divine Persons. Such views were still contested. As I noted earlier, the doctrine of the Trinity had been forged slowly, fitfully, over the course of the fourth century, and Milan had been a battleground in recent memory. Ambrose's predecessor, Auxentius, had held that the Son

[133] Ambrose, *sacr.* 5.3.17 (SC 25bis:128); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 145.
[134] Ambrose, *sacr.* 3.1.3 (SC 25bis:92); trans. Yarnold, *Awe-Inspiring Rites*, 121.
[135] Ambrose, *mys.* 5.28 (SC 25bis:170); trans. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF, 152.

was, in some sense, less than the Father and pointed precisely to Christ's death on the cross as an indicator of his lesser status. Ambrose thus took pains to stress that the Milanese rite must not be read as indicating the Son as somehow "lesser." This added phrase, "in his cross," he noted, held profound consequences: "without the cross of Christ, what is water but an ordinary element without any sacramental effect. . . . In this faith you died to the world and rose to God."[136] For Ambrose, salvation came through Christ's cross—and through it alone.

Finally, like Cyril, Ambrose reserved instruction on the Lord's Prayer for mystagogy and treated it in the course of his comments on the Eucharist. For Ambrose the Lord's Prayer, like the creed, had a dazzling brevity: "You see how brief it is, and yet full of every virtue, every power." He explained it phrase by phrase, much as he had done with the creed. Because of baptism, the neophytes could now enjoy a new intimacy with God, and "as though a son or daughter, you call him Father. . . . This is a profound privilege." Ambrose applied allegorical methods to interpreting the Lord's Prayer. He claimed that the phrase "give us our daily bread" mystically referred to Eucharist: "not bread that enters the body, but the bread of eternal life that undergirds the very substance of our soul."[137] Ambrose allegorized Jesus' command in Matthew 6 to shut the door and pray inside: that inside room, he claimed, referred to "the interior person, the closed and secret inner room of your heart"; "when you pray, do not raise your voice and cry out. . . . Pray your prayer in secret secure that the One who sees all and listens to the universe can hear you in secret."[138] Augustine would follow Ambrose's lead both in allegorizing the Lord's Prayer and in stressing its interiority.

LESSONS FROM THE THRESHOLD

Augustine emerged from Ambrose's catechumenate a changed man. He walked away from his prestigious teaching post and the

[136] Ambrose, *mys.* 4.20-21 (SC 25bis:112–14); trans. Ramsey, *Ambrose*, ECF, 150.
[137] Ambrose, *sacr.* 5.4.18-24 (SC 25bis:128–32); author's translation.
[138] Ambrose, *sacr.* 6.3.12-15 (SC 25bis:144–46); author's translation.

fame and career prospects it offered; he also broke off his high-society engagement and committed himself to celibacy. His conversion cost him much. It signaled the embrace of new values and a new lifestyle. Various intellectual seeds planted by Ambrose had begun to take root, though it would take years for them to unfold fully. First, Augustine would come to see the Bible in a new light and contrast it with the view he held before his conversion: "I now see the Scriptures as something neither open to the proud nor revealed to the immature, something lowly as one first enters in but lofty as one makes headway, something veiled in mysteries. Then [as a young man], however, I was not such that I could lower my head for its doorway so as to enter its ways."[139] Thanks to Ambrose, Augustine not only recognized that the Scriptures held profound mysteries beneath their simple, often inelegant surface; he now savored how intellectual pride had blocked him from reading it aright. Right reading he now compared to the way a person lowered his head so as not to bump it on the doorjamb that marked the entrance to a stairway. This central lesson was one he would later teach his catechumens.

Second, he emerged with new perspectives on faith and reason. While the Manichees had promised rational certainties (though, in retrospect, they had delivered only unnourishing myths), Ambrose transformed Augustine's views on the reasonability of religious authority, both the Bible's and the church's. Just as a sick patient, whatever his or her intellectual aptitude, trusts a physician's expertise, so too in the journey to God: "The healing of the soul, which God's providence and inexpressible kindness brings about step by distinct step, is something extremely beautiful. It takes place in the stages of authority and reason. Authority requires faith, and that paves the way for people to use reason. Reason leads us to understanding and knowledge, although authority does not lack reason."[140] Augustine would encapsulate this new perspective in the title of an early treatise of his, *On the Usefulness of Faith* (*De utilitate credendi*), and regularly quote Isaiah 7:9 (in its Septuagint version): "Unless you believe you will not understand."

[139] *conf.* 3.5.9 (CCL 27:31); author's translation.

[140] *uera rel.* 24.45 (CCL 32:215); trans. Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 38.

Third, he began grappling with the nature of evil from a new vantage point. In one of his earliest treatises, *On the Catholic and the Manichean Ways of Life*, begun a year after his baptism, he discussed a breakthrough insight about the nature of evil. Whereas Manichees had spoken of evil as something opposed to God, Augustine came to see evil not as a thing in itself but as a no-thing, a privation of being, an unmaking of the good that God had made. This metaphysical insight was coupled with what Ambrose had taught him about freedom of moral choice and our high moral responsibilities.

Finally, under Ambrose's tutelage he had come to accept the full reality of the Incarnation. He not only definitively rejected his old Manichean notion of a Christ who feigned being human; he now insisted: "I acknowledged in Christ one not with just a human body, nor a soul and body without a [human] mind, but a complete human being."[141] During the catechumenate he had passed through a brief phase in which he conceived of Jesus as a God-inspired teacher of wisdom. By its end he came to accept—even if he could not yet work out its full intellectual implications—a Christ at once fully divine and fully human. Augustine had, as Michael Cameron has noted, come to realize that "a Christ who exempted himself from history also disqualified himself (and the Scriptures that conveyed his story) from embedding God's grace and truth in human life. . . . If Christ avoided human birth from a human mother, then human history was sealed off from divine involvement."[142]

Augustine, together with family and friends, left Milan in the months soon after his baptism. Because a rebel Roman general and his navy had blockaded the seaport of Ostia, they found themselves stuck in Rome for the next year. During the interim Augustine's mother died. Finally, in 388, Augustine and his circle returned to Africa, to his hometown of Thagaste, where they embarked on

[141] *conf.* 7.19.25 (CCL 27:109); author's translation.

[142] Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 111. Cameron adds: "In my judgment, Augustine's fight against claims about Christ's feigned flesh is the single most important factor in Augustine's turn toward the biblical-historical perspective in the 390s" (p. 258).

an experiment in Christian community. To some, like his friend Nebridius, this venture seemed an old-fashioned gesture: the embrace of a life of philosophic retirement (*otium*). But it also hinted at something new. The new fashion then sweeping Christianity was organized asceticism. Augustine's community appears as an early ephemeral example of one of those wide-ranging experiments in monasticism springing up around the late-fourth-century empire. Augustine and his friends styled themselves "servants of God" (*servi Dei*). Augustine had grand hopes for them. As he told one correspondent, he and his companions aspired in the quiet of their contemplative retreat "to become godlike (*deificari . . . in otio*)."[143] Such dreams proved short-lived. His son, Adeodatus, and his close friend, Nebridius, would die within the year.

Augustine began acquiring a reputation as a writer. He authored philosophic dialogues such as *On the Teacher* (*De magistro*), his first biblical commentary, *On Genesis against the Manichees* (*De genesi contra Manichaeos*), as well as a brilliant apologia for Christianity, *On True Religion* (*De uera religione*), intended for philosophically minded pagans. In 391 he journeyed to the bustling port city of Hippo Regius in hopes of recruiting a new man for his monastic community. While there he attended church just as its bishop, Valerius, asked his congregation to nominate someone as presbyter. According to Augustine's biographer, Possidius of Calama, the crowd "seized him and, as is customary in such cases, brought him to the bishop for ordination."[144] Forced ordinations were commonplace in early Christianity. Similar forced enlistments had led to the ordinations of Cyprian, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. As a newly ordained presbyter in Hippo, Augustine suddenly found himself in a familiar role: as a teacher. And his first students would be what he and his companions had been just a few years earlier: *competentes*.[145]

[143] *ep.* 10.2 (CCL 31:25); trans. Roland J. Teske, *Letters*, WSA II/1:34. See Brown, *Eye of the Needle*, 167–72.

[144] Possidius of Calama, *Vita Augustini* 4 (Geerlings, 32–34); trans. Mary M. Muller, *Early Christian Biographies*, FOTC 15:77. See Augustine's own account in *s.* 355.2.

[145] See *s.* 216, given in Lent to *competentes*; for an analysis see chap. 6 below.

Chart 2

The Catecheses of Ambrose of Milan

Work	Text	Translation	Topics Covered
I. The Catechumenate: Passing References			
De Cain et Abel 1.37	CSEL 32.1: 339–409	FOTC 42: 393–94	*Disciplina arcani* & Lord's Prayer
Exposition of Ps 118, sermon 2.26-28	CSEL 62: 250–51	-----	*Disciplina arcani*
Exposition of Ps 118, sermon 20.48-49	CSEL 62: 469	-----	Suspect motives
Exposition of Gospel of Luke 4.76	SC 45: 181	-----	No response to call
Exposition of Gospel of Luke 6.107	SC 45: 269	-----	Instructing catechumens
II. Lenten Sermons (to the Whole Assembly)			
Elijah and Fasting	CSEL 32.2: 411–65	Buck, PS 19	Begin Lenten discipline
On Abraham, Book 1	CSEL 32.1: 501–64	-----	Abraham: faith, marriage
Exposition of Psalms 36–40	CSEL 64: 70–258	-----	Senses of Scripture; exhorts *competentes*
Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose*	PL 14: 27–46	Ramsey, ECF, 196–218	Ambrose as catechist
III. *Traditio Symboli* (to the *Competentes*)			
Explanation of the Creed (*Explanatio symboli*)	SC 25bis: 46–58	-----	Hands over, explains Creed phrase by phrase
IV. Mystagogical Works (to Neophytes during Easter Week)			
On the Sacraments (*De sacramentis)*			
1 (Tues)	SC 25bis: 60–72	FOTC 44: 269–77	Ephphatha; first anointing; renunciation

Chart 2—Cont'd

The Catecheses of Ambrose of Milan

Work	Text	Translation	Topics Covered
2 (Wed)	SC 25bis: 74–88	FOTC 44: 279–88	Baptism: OT figures; font as "crucifixion"
3 (Thurs)	SC 25bis: 90–100	FOTC 44:289–95	Washing of feet; Chrism
4 (Fri)	SC 25bis: 102–18	FOTC 44: 297–307	Eucharist: Roman canon; consecration; Amen
5 (Sat)	SC 25bis: 120–36	FOTC 44: 309–18	Eucharist: sober intoxication Lord's Prayer
6 (Sun)	SC 25bis: 138–54	FOTC 44: 319–28	Prayer: where, how, order
On the Mysteries (*De mysteriis*)	SC 25bis: 156–92	FOTC 44: 5–28; Ramsey, ECF, 145–60	Rationale of Lenten pedagogy; *disciplina arcani*; ephphatha; water & the Old Testament; washing of feet; new robes; "ancient" sacraments; consecration; Amen; Eucharist

CHAPTER 3

Evangelization: Unrolling the Scroll

Sometime around 403, Deogratias, a deacon from the church in Carthage, sent Augustine a request: "to write something on the catechizing of beginners."[1] Deogratias, it seems, had the task of teaching those needing "initial grounding in Christian faith" and had been assigned this ministry because he had both theological know-how and good delivery. But his popularity left him feeling flat. His teaching had become "dull and distasteful," even to himself. He felt he talked too long and with too little enthusiasm. So he wrote Augustine for advice on method: "how to go about bringing home to newcomers in a suitable way the central points of the faith that gives us our identity as Christians."[2] In North Africa at this time the teaching these newcomers received was limited. They might attend only a single lecture before becoming catechumens. Deogratias wanted to make this one-time lecture more effective and sought Augustine's advice on three points: first, where the "narrative" (*narratio*) on Scripture should begin; second, how much of the biblical account it should cover; and, third, whether at the end, to "make use of an exhortation or simply invoke the precepts . . . to know how to uphold a Christian way of life and Christian

[1] *cat. rud.* 1.1 (CCL 46:121); author's translation. 400 CE has been the traditional date for this, but Pierre-Marie Hombert, *Nouvelle recherches de chronologie augustiniennes*, CEASA 163 (Paris: Institut d'études Augustiniennes, 2000), 41–44, has argued for this slightly later date in light of recent discoveries.

[2] *cat. rud.* 1.1 (CCL 46:121); trans. Raymond Canning, *Augustine of Hippo: Instructing Beginners in Faith*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006), 53.

profession of faith."[3] Augustine answered with a brief treatise, *On Catechizing Beginners* (*De catechizandis rudibus*).[4] In it he addressed Deogratias's queries about method. But Augustine considered the deacon's complaints about weariness and boredom a problem at least as important as technique and so offered an array of remedies to reignite his zest for teaching.

This treatise helped inspire the pedagogy and programs of Christian teachers over the centuries: Bede and Alcuin in the eighth century, Erasmus and Francis Xavier in the sixteenth, Josef Jungmann and the kerygmatic movement in the twentieth.[5] Educators have been struck by Augustine's pedagogical acumen and psychological sensitivity and have tended to highlight his more generalizable insights at the expense of his original focus.[6] That focus was directed to a quite specific group—non-Christian inquirers—and a quite specific genre of instruction—a *first* catechesis. These limits need to be appreciated. His concern was not to set

[3] *cat. rud.* 1.1 (CCL 46:121); trans. Canning, 54.

[4] For helpful notes on *cat. rud.* see Goulven Madec, ed., *La première catéchèse: De catechizandis rudibus*, BA 11/1 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1991); also Joseph P. Christopher, *S. Aurelii Augustini Hipponiensis episcopi De catechizandis rudibus,* Patristic Studies 8 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1926), which, while dated, remains useful. On Augustine's title see Madec, "Introduction," *La première catéchèse*, 11–14. The word *rudes* in everyday Latin meant "unpolished," "ignorant," or "illiterate." In Christian parlance it acquired a specialized meaning and was applied to anyone, even one highly educated, who was ignorant of things Christian (e.g., Ambrose, *Expositio psalmi CXVIII* 18.26; Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 2; Cyprian, *ep.* 70.2). I therefore translate it here as "beginner." The Latin verb *catechizare* was a loanword from Greek and would have sounded foreign to Augustine's Latin readers. Latin authors applied it both to evangelizing and to catechizing. See Tertullian, *De idololatria* 9; Marius Victorinus, *In epistolam Pauli ad Galatas* 2.6.6; Jerome, *Commentarius in epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas* 2.4, 3.6; Augustine, *cat. rud.* 1.1, 8.12, 10.14, also *c. Faust.*13.7.

[5] Madec, "Introduction," *La première catéchèse*, 32–38.

[6] One sees this in works inspired by the kerygmatic movement: Eugene Kevane, *Augustine the Educator: A Study in the Fundamentals of Christian Formation* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1964); George Howie, *Educational Theory and Practice in St. Augustine* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

forth a comprehensive program of catechesis or of evangelization. He focused instead on a small but critical aspect of such evangelizing: a first systematic proclamation of the good news of Christ.

Among surviving documents from the ancient catechumenate, Augustine's *On Catechizing* is unique. There are, of course, many ancient apologetic works—Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Tertullian's *Apology*, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Preparation for the Gospel*, Augustine's own *City of God*—that expound and summarize the Christian message and defend Christianity against its detractors.[7] Then there is Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Oration*, meant to offer teachers a philosophically sophisticated arsenal for defending Christian essentials. None of these works, while emblematic of ancient Christian evangelization, addresses what Augustine does: how to present the "good news" to one who now wishes to become a Christian. This document, while unique, should not be made to testify to more than it does. An older (and still influential) scholarship claimed that giving inquirers the "good news" in a single speech represented something new, that this was a fourth-century concoction and emblematic of a catechumenate in decline. These claims, to be blunt, lack grounding.[8] It is

[7] On ancient Christian apologetics see Eric Osborn, "The Apologists," in *The Early Christian World*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 2000), 1:525–51; Mark Edwards, "Apologetics," 548–64 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mark J. Edwards, Martin Goodman, S. R. F. Price, and Christopher Rowland, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[8] Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy, to the Time of Gregory the Great*, trans. Francis A. Brunner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 249, claims that *cat. rud.* is an example of the "reconfiguration" of the third-century catechumenate, part of "a plan" by "the Church . . . to make provision for the great majority who put off baptism" and "devised to give the most necessary spiritual equipment for those wishing to become Christians . . . supplied immediately at the beginning of the catechumenate." This claim lacks any documentary justification and presumes widespread uniformity in "the church." Local diversity, not empire-wide uniformity, was, in matters of initiation, the norm both liturgically and catechetically. Augustine's *cat. rud.* gives us a glimpse only of patterns in early fifth-century North Africa. We

important to savor the fragmentary character of the historical record—particularly when it comes to ancient Christian liturgy—and reconstruct things on an evidentiary basis and not on arguments from silence. As for what went on before and what went on across the breadth of the empire, it seems better to say that we simply do not know.

In this chapter I situate this work in its original social and literary contexts and seek to read it within its proper ambit, namely, the fifth-century North African catechumenate. Augustine's treatise has two parts. In the first he spells out principles for doing this first evangelical catechesis. These principles constitute not so much a theory in any abstract sense as they are reflections culled from his own experience in this ministry. Here he treats three topics: the candidate (chapters 5–6, 8–9); the catechesis (chapters 3–4, 7); and the catechist (chapters 2, 10–16). In the second part he puts principle into practice and offers two sample talks: the first (chapters 16–25) is lengthy; the second (chapters 26–27), quite brief.

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know very little about third-century patterns and are in no position to judge whether it represents a shift from earlier practice or simply a continuation of older ways. *Cat. rud.* makes no mention of people "putting off" baptism. Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries* (New York: Sadlier, 1979), 94, says the following about the speech Augustine recommends in *cat. rud.*: "How could a pre-catechesis that was reduced to a meeting that did not exceed two hours work an effective transformation? The situation had certainly changed with respect to the preceding century. If, despite the great amount of patristic literature we have from the fourth century, we have so few witnesses to a serious admission examination for the catechumenate, it is because, from this time on, the rite was conferred too readily. It was used as a lure, while it should have sanctioned a conversion! And without a true conversion, it was an empty gesture." Dujarier's claims are equally undocumented and riddled with assumptions, combining here his questionable thesis—that the third century represented the "ideal" of the catechumenate—with a dubious argument from silence. Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144–46, has sharply criticized this harmonizing trend in studies of early Christian baptism, singling out Jungmann's *The Early Church* as a prime example (p. 145); against this Bradshaw maps out the diversity in surviving sources (pp. 146–70).

THE CANDIDATE: MILIEU, MOTIVES, AND TYPES

From an early date North Africa had been a Christian stronghold, not only in the cities but in the countryside as well. In Hippo Regius, Christians were a decided majority. As Augustine once reminded his congregation: "You will find many households in this city in which there is not a single pagan, while there is no household to be found in which there are no Christians. And if you were to examine the matter carefully, there is no household to be found in which there aren't more Christians than pagans."[9] Between 390 and 410 the alliance of church and state witnessed a highwater mark. With it came the gradual, sporadic, and sometimes violent suppression of public pagan practice. Imperial edicts in 391, 395, and 399 officially banned sacrifices, but pagan festivals were allowed to continue; these edicts also forbade the destruction of temples, which were now relegated to the status of cultural artifacts. Such legislation tended to be erratically enforced, but around 399 two imperial officials, Gaudentius and Jovius, came to Carthage and, according to Augustine's report in *City of God*, "destroyed the temples of the false gods and smashed their images."[10] This was probably the work of Christian mobs who overstepped the law and took the work of demolition into their own hands. Augustine worried that such legislation simply drove paganism underground; as he remarked in a recently discovered sermon: "All public pagan rites, indeed, have been removed in the name of Christ by the laws of the state and have ceased to be honored on

[9] *s.* 302.19 (PL 39:1392); trans. Edmund Hill, *Sermons*, WSA III/8:309. In *Cres.* 3.63.70 (BA 31:414–16) he speaks of them as a "small minority (*paucissimi*)." On possible reasons for Christianity's success in North Africa see W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 87–111.

[10] *ciu. dei* 18.54 (CCL 48:655); trans. William Babcock, *The City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), WSA 1/7:344. On the erratic suppression and widespread survival of paganism see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1:938–43; Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 195–259. On the events of 399 in North Africa see Othmar Perler, *Les Voyages de saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969), 391–95.

official state occasions, as some of them had been treated as official magic rites. But just as previously there were also private magic rites, so too these things are still being done secretly, after their public official practice has been forbidden."[11]

When Augustine preached in Carthage in 401 the assembly enthusiastically broke in and chanted: "Down with Roman gods, down with Roman gods."[12] This was a victory celebration with violent overtones. Augustine, like other Christians, was for a time swept up in this high-pitched atmosphere. He saw in the demise of paganism a fulfillment of ancient prophecies: that God was uprooting the idols of the nations; that "the whole world is by now Christ's choir, and as Christ's choir it sings harmoniously from east to west."[13] Christian propagandists like the poet Prudentius (348–ca. 413) acclaimed these "Christian times" as the dawn of a new day: "Rome fled from her old errors and shook the dark mist from her wrinkled face—her nobility now ready to enter on the ways of eternity and to follow Christ at the calling of her great leader."[14]

This was more wishful thinking than fact. Many aristocrats in Rome clung tenaciously to their ancestral faith, and their resistance to Christianity affected the populace of North Africa.[15] Senatorial

[11] *s.* 198.28 (= *s. Dolbeau* 26) (*Vingt-six*, 388); trans. Edmund Hill, *Newly Discovered Sermons*, WSA III/11:202. See the discussion of this important sermon at the end of this chapter.

[12] *s.* 24.6 (PL 38:166). The Maurists interpret the repeated "*dii Romani*" as the *notarius* recording the congregation's acclamations. Lambot, CCL 41:332, claims the repetition is Augustine's. Here I follow Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 227, and Hill, WSA III/2:80n31, who side with the Maurists' reading.

[13] *en. Ps.* 149.7 (CSEL 95.5:278); trans. Boulding, WSA III/20:498. See also *en. Ps.* 46.5, 62.1; *s.* 22.4, 346A.2 (= *s. Caillau* 2, 19), 97A.2 (= *s. Casin.* 2,114). On the atmosphere of this period and Augustine's later distancing himself from it see Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 30–44.

[14] Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum* 1.506-10 (CSEL 61:238); quoted in Markus, *Saeculum*, 28.

[15] See A. H. M. Jones, "The Social Background of the Struggle between Paganism and Christianity," 17–37 in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

families owned large tracts of land there, and tenant farmers who worked these lands, it seems, were wary of converting for fear of reprisal from their powerful patrons.[16] Paganism remained a force to be reckoned with. Pagans continued to occupy positions of power, and intellectual centers in North Africa such as Madaura, where Augustine had done his literary studies as a teenager, resisted changing age-old ways. Maximus, a pagan grammarian from Madaura, wrote Augustine and, while disavowing crude myths, could boast: "We see and approve that the forum of our city is inhabited by a crowd of salutary deities. . . . For we worship our gods with pious prayers openly in the daylight before the eyes and ears of all mortals and render them propitious to us by sweet [sacrificial] victims, and we insist that this is seen and approved by all."[17]

Pagans, too, could be violent. In 399, in Sufes, when a statue of Hercules was knocked down a pagan mob responded by murdering sixty Christians. The town council, meanwhile, sat back and demanded that Christians pay reparations for the damaged statue. Augustine lost all patience and responded sarcastically: "If you say that Hercules is your god, we can take up a collection from everybody and buy you a god from the stone-cutter. You, on the other hand, need to give us back the lives which your fierce hand has snatched from us."[18]

This political and social ferment at the turn of the fifth century forms the backdrop for *On Catechizing*. Yet it is only a wide-angle view. These larger social forces and news items touched the

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1963), at 31–37; Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 291–307, 322–25.

[16] *ep.* 136.3; *en. Ps.* 54.13. On this see Peter Brown, "Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 51 (1961): 1–11, reprinted in idem, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (1972; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 161–82; Michele Renée Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[17] *ep.* 16.1-3 (CCL 31:38–39); trans. Teske, WSA II/1:46–47.

[18] *ep.* 50 (CCL 31:214); trans. Wilfrid Parsons, *St. Augustine: Letters*, FOTC 12:237.

mass of people in curious and complex ways. Often personal dynamics—exchanges with friends and family, experiences at school, local events—came into play and shaped conversions to Christianity. One gets a glimmer of that complexity in Augustine's reflections on the motives and types of candidates.

In chapters 5 and 6 of *On Catechizing*, Augustine takes up how to handle interrogating pagan inquirers. It was traditional to question candidates about their lifestyle and career, to check whether they might be involved in the brutal public games or the vast apparatus of pagan worship.[19] Augustine thought interrogation should be more concerned with motive: "It is decidedly useful to inform ourselves beforehand of the newcomer's state of mind and of the motives that have influenced him to take up our religion. If there is no one else to give us this information, we will have to question the newcomer himself."[20] This psychological accent is typical of Augustine—and noteworthy since he believed psychology had theological implications. As he told Deogratias, "There is no voice that reaches the ears of God except the stirrings of the heart."[21] In *Confessions*, completed around the same time as *On Catechizing*, Augustine would scrutinize his own subtly divided will and curious complexity of heart. Augustine's approach to the interrogation mirrored the older tradition in one respect: he questioned not the candidates (unless necessity dictated), but rather those who brought them. But he used this traditional examination in untraditional ways: that "from the replies the person gives we can craft the introduction (*exordium*) for our talk."[22] He thus saw this procedure less as an entrance test and more as a way to ensure that one's catechesis played into the experience of the inquirer.

[19] See *Apostolic Tradition* 15-16 (Bradshaw et al., 82–83, 88–89) and its parallels: *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.2-13; *Canons of Hippolytus* 10-11; *Testamentum Domini* 2.1-2.

[20] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:129–30); trans. Canning, 73–74.

[21] *cat. rud.* 9.13 (CCL 46:135); author's translation.

[22] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:130); author's translation. Note the word "*exordium*" here; this technical term is discussed in the next section.

The motives that prompted conversion then were not the sort one finds today. Augustine notes that most were driven by fear—not of political authorities, but of God: "It very rarely happens—I can safely say, never—that anyone comes wishing to become a Christian who has not in some way or other been struck by fear of God."[23] Augustine and his contemporaries presumed that such fears could well be of divine origin. Fear of the last judgment had spurred Victorinus's conversion. And Augustine, as a politic catechumen, had fretted: "Death is uncertain. It may suddenly carry us off. In what state shall we depart this life? . . . And must we not rather pay for this negligence with punishments?"[24] Africans, both pagan and Christian, were prone to such fears. The old pagan high-god of Africa, Saturn, was a fearsome character. Even "the God of the African Christians," as Peter Brown notes, "was very much the awe-inspiring Judge."[25]

A second inducement was dreams. Trust in the revelatory power of dreams touched the religious consciousness of pagans and Christians alike.[26] As Robin Lane Fox has noted, "In their dreams, pagans of all classes and backgrounds kept the closest company with the gods."[27] Pagans had developed an array of technologies—potions, diets, rites—meant to conjure up such "great dreams," and certain temples had special sleeping chambers where devotees could personally meet the gods in their dreams. Christians—and African Christians, in particular—shared this trust in the divinatory power of dreams. The great North African martyr Perpetua (d. 203) had, while in prison, dreamt of a gladiatorial combat. This she interpreted as a divine revelation: that on the day

[23] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:129); trans. Canning, 72.

[24] *conf.* 6.11.19 (CCL 27:86); trans. Chadwick, 105.

[25] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 191. See also Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 97–99.

[26] On this see Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); also Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 150–63 (on pagans) and 419–92 (on Christians).

[27] Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 150.

of her martyrdom she would enjoy victory over Satan.[28] Cyprian of Carthage, according to his biographer Pontius, had a dream the year before his martyrdom: he beheld himself on trial and saw his execution enacted in pantomime.[29] Augustine's own mother, Monnica, placed great confidence in dreams and claimed "that by a certain smell, indescribable in words, she could tell the difference between a [divine] revelation and her own soul dreaming."[30]

A third inducement came from miracles, especially healings. Augustine tells the story of Dioscorus, a high-ranking physician in the court, for whom "only a miracle would bow that neck and tame that tongue": "His daughter, who was his sole consolation, was ill, and her illness led to a complete loss of hope for her temporal health; even her father gave up. . . . That old man was moved to implore the mercy of Christ and bound himself by a vow that he would become a Christian if he saw his daughter in good health. This happened."[31] This miracle seems to have prompted Dioscorus to become a catechumen, but he "pretended ignorance about fulfilling his vow" of baptism until struck by blindness. Dioscorus then made a second vow: that he would seek baptism if he recovered his sight. When this second healing miracle occurred, he "put in his name." Augustine himself had witnessed miracles in the months prior to his conversion:

[28] *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 10. For the text, translation, and commentary see Thomas J. Heffernan, ed., *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Ross S. Kraemer and Shira L. Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," in Esler, *The Early Christian World*, 2:1048–68; Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano, eds., *Perpetua's Passion: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Augustine preached regularly on the feast of Perpetua; see *s.* 280-282 as well as the newly discovered *s.* 282 auct. (= *s. Erfurt* 1). See Dorothee Elm von der Otten, "Perpetual Felicity: Sermons of Augustine on Female Martyrdom (*s.* 280-282 *auct.* [Erfurt 1]," *Studia Patristica* 49 (2010): 203–9.

[29] Pontius, *Vita Caecilli Cypriani* 12 (CSEL 3:12–14).

[30] *conf.* 6.13.23 (CCL 27:89); trans. Chadwick, 108.

[31] *ep.* 227 (CSEL 57:482–83); trans. Teske, WSA II/4:103.

> At this same time you [O God] revealed in a vision to the aforementioned Ambrose, your bishop, where the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius were hidden. . . . When they had been exposed to the light of day and dug up, and were being transported with due honor to the Ambrosian basilica, some people previously tormented by unclean spirits were restored to health as confession was wrung out of these same demons. But that was not all. A certain citizen of Milan, very well known in the city, who had been blind for several years, became aware of the riotous joy of the people. . . . He was led to the basilica and begged to be admitted, so that he might touch with his handkerchief the funeral bier of your holy ones, whose "death is precious in your sight" (Ps 115:15). He did so and applied the handkerchief to his eyes: they were immediately opened. From that the news spread fast.[32]

Such events were heralded in Christian evangelical campaigns, for Christians, like their pagan confrères, routinely made reports of cures part of cult propaganda.[33] Such reports did not necessarily convince. Augustine as a catechumen and in his early years as bishop treated these with a measured skepticism (though late in his career he took greater interest in them).[34] Pagans could write off Christian claims as "sorcery" and extended the same critique to Jesus' deeds. As Augustine says in one sermon, "There are unbelieving people who disparage Christ by saying that he used the arts of magic to do what he did."[35] A circle of aristocratic pagan intellectuals whom Augustine had met used to dismiss Jesus' deeds

[32] *conf.* 9.7.16 (CCL 27:142); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:221 (modified).

[33] Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 83–98; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan & Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Norton, 1965), 124–26; James Carleton Paget, "Miracles in Early Christianity," 131–48 in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[34] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 27–28, 77–78; Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 464–70.

[35] *s.* 43.5 (CCL 41:510); trans. Hill, WSA III/2:240. Augustine repeats this regularly: *cons. eu.* 1.9.14, 1.14.22; *s.* 71.5, 229J.4 (= *s. Guelf.* app. 7).

as unspectacular compared to the wonders wrought by the first-century philosopher Apollonius of Tyana and the second-century African novelist Apuleius.[36]

These inducements—fears, dreams, miracles—had once prompted conversion to pagan cults. Now they encouraged conversion to Christianity. Yet there was a difference. What distinguished Christianity, according to Ramsay MacMullen, was that "it destroyed belief as well as creating it": if a miracle was associated with a pagan god, the person simply added one more god to his or her personal pantheon; if a miracle was associated with Christianity, the person would "now deny the pantheon entire. . . . It was this result, destruction, that non-Christians of the time perceived as uniquely Christian."[37]

Augustine advised that one use a certain finesse in handling candidates spurred by such motives:

> Should the newcomer perhaps reply that it was a warning or a frightening sign from heaven that brought him to become a Christian, he thereby provides us with a very fruitful opening for our introduction, namely, the idea of the great solicitude that God has for us. We should obviously try to redirect his attention from the path of miraculous events and visions and dreams of this kind to the firmer path and more dependable oracles of the scriptures. . . . There he would proceed with greater confidence and safety; instead of searching for marvels that can be seen, he would become accustomed to hoping for those that cannot be seen, and he would receive God's warnings not in his sleep but when he is awake.[38]

Augustine did not deny that dreams, fears, or wonders might serve as "oracles." Rather, he hoped to divert inquirers' attention

[36] Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 98–101; on this in Augustine's milieu see Pierre Courcelle, "Propos antichrétiennes rapportés par S. Augustin," *Recherches augustiniennes* 1 (1958): 149–86.

[37] Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 108–9.

[38] *cat. rud.* 6.10 (CCL 46:130–31); trans. Canning, 75–76.

to more trustworthy ones: the Christian Scriptures. Augustine had tasted their oracular power in his own conversion. In the garden in Milan he had obeyed the call to "pick it up, read it (*tolle, lege*)" as a "divine command" and read the first passage from Paul's letters on which his eyes fell.[39]

Augustine not only saw the Scriptures as an oracle; he thought that the catechist could be one as well. One finds this repeatedly in passing remarks in *On Catechizing*: that "we let God speak through us as best we can," that the candidate "is listening to us—or, better, listening to God through us."[40] Augustine interpreted his own experience in just such terms. In *Confessions* he looked back on Ambrose as God's "holy oracle," and in an early letter he characterized a piece of Ambrose's practical advice—that one follow the liturgical practice of one's locale—as "a heavenly oracle."[41]

The candidates Augustine dealt with did not *usually* harbor political ambitions. Hippo Regius was too much of a backwater town for such types. As we saw, reports—and denunciations—of politic conversions came from those, like Eusebius of Caesarea and Ambrose of Milan, who moved among elite circles in and around the imperial court. Even so, Augustine had met his share of opportunists: "If a person wishes to become a Christian in the expectation of gaining some advantage from people whom he thinks there is no other way of pleasing, or in order to avoid suffering some disadvantage from people whose resentment or ill will he dreads, that person does not really wish to become a Christian at all but to make a pretense of becoming one. . . . If he has approached us with insincere intentions, wanting to secure advantages in this world or avoid the troubles of life, he will inevitably lie."[42]

Note Augustine's accent here: While he knew of opportunists who sought "advantages," he was equally conscious that many feared "resentment," "ill will," and "troubles." These may well have been either townspeople frightened by the government

[39] *conf.* 8.12.29 (CCL 27:131).
[40] *cat. rud.* 11.16, 7.11 (CCL 46:140, 132); author's translation.
[41] *conf.* 6.3.4 (CCL 27:76); *ep.* 54.3.
[42] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:129–30); trans. Canning, 73–74.

crackdown on paganism or poor farmers whose powerful landlord had become Christian. For such cases Augustine advised prudence and compassion: "For the beginning of your talk you must take your cues from the very lie he tells—not so as to try and unmask his lying, as though that were clear to you. But if the inquirer says he came with a motive that really is praiseworthy—it doesn't matter whether he truly means it or not—we should, nevertheless, commend and praise the motive he says he came with so to make him delight in actually being the kind of person that he has tried to appear as."[43] Augustine knew from self-examination the complex layers of his own interiority: that inside the human soul are "vast palaces of memory"; that "I do not grasp all that I am"; that "I have become a question to myself."[44] He presumed that others, too, had this complexity of heart. So he advised Deogratias to presume the best and to recognize the mystery of those he dealt with: "It is hidden from us when the person we now see in front of us in body really does come in spirit. Even so, we should deal with him in such a way that this desire may develop in him even if it does not as yet exist."[45] Augustine also suggested that God might use the catechist as a graced instrument: "The mercy of God is often present through the ministry of the one catechizing, so that a person, swept up by our teaching, now wishes to become in reality what he had decided to feign."[46]

This lenient attitude led Augustine to defend even suspicious conversions. Around 401, in Carthage—where politic conversions were more likely—Augustine found himself saddled with defending a banker named Faustinus who, people believed, had his eye on the office of magistrate. After a sermon on St. Paul, Augustine had Faustinus come up in front of the congregation and then said:

> We cannot see into the human heart nor bring it out into the open. . . . The Apostle Paul says: "Brothers and sisters, do not

[43] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:130); author's translation.
[44] *conf.* 10.8.12, 10.8.15, 10.50.33 (CCL 27:161, 163, 182); author's translation.
[45] *cat. rud.* 5.9 (CCL 46:129); author's translation.
[46] Ibid.

make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes, for He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness, and will manifest the heart's motives, and then everyone will receive praise from God" (1 Cor 4:5). You cannot peer into the heart of new Christians. . . . You're going to say: "But Faustinus believed because he had to." The same could be said about the one I spoke of a little earlier. St. Paul, too, at one point was "a blasphemer and a persecutor and a scoffer" (1 Tm 1:13). He also was forced, a certain necessity imposed on him. . . . In the meantime, brothers and sisters, let us stay with what's been conceded to us, to what we as human beings can do, and not lay claim to what's beyond us. . . . Let us not claim to judge others' thoughts, but let us set before God our prayers, even for those about whom we maybe have doubts. Maybe this new one himself has certain doubts. Love him abundantly in all his doubting. By your love, remove doubts from the heart of one who is less-than-firm. . . .

[People used to say:] "Who did such-and-such?" "Faustinus." "Who did such-and-such?" "Faustinus." "Who used to be against Christ?" "Faustinus." "Who now fears Christ?" "Faustinus." . . . And so, brothers and sisters . . . teach him the good pathway. Let him find that good pathway in you. Now that he's been made a Christian, let him discern the difference between what he has dismissed and what he has found. The future will tell whether his life and his zeal for the faith of Christ prove worthy.[47]

This instance points to what lengths Augustine presumed the best in candidates. As he notes here, his paradigm for conversion was St. Paul, whose turnabout had been so dramatic and so momentous for the history of Christianity. And so Augustine, while hardly naïve, was willing to give the benefit of the doubt even to dubious cases.

In chapters 8 and 9 of *On Catechizing*, Augustine discusses three types of inquirers: the unlearned, the well-educated, and those with average educations. Concerning the unlearned he says almost nothing, but the two sample talks that make up the second

[47] *s.* 279.10-11 (= *s. Morin* 1) (MA 1:589–91); author's translation., *AOW*, 91–92. This was delivered in June 401, around the same period as *cat. rud.*

half of his treatise were geared to them. In this section he focuses his remarks on the latter two. These, while few in number, were a social elite. Because of their potential influence Augustine took special care to address challenges they presented to catechists. He describes the well-educated as follows:

> Suppose that a person who is well-grounded in the liberal arts has come to you to be catechized, that he has already decided to be a Christian and has now come to you for the purpose of being made one. Undoubtedly such a person would have already gained a considerable knowledge of our Scriptures and of our ecclesiastical literature and, equipped with this knowledge, will now only have come so as to be able to share in the sacraments. Such people generally do not put off looking into things until the last moment when they are to become Christians. They tend, rather, to discuss the stirrings of their hearts with people to whom they can talk with confidence.[48]

This description resembles an individual Augustine had spoken of in *Confessions*: Marius Victorinus.[49] With such candidates he advised that one "be brief and not annoyingly pound away on things they already know."[50] Still, he advised that one do a quick review, but in such a way that they "not be lectured on matters as though from a teacher."[51] He advised asking candidates of this sort what they had been reading, whether the Bible itself or later Christian authors. If books had influenced their decision, the catechist was to begin by saying something about these. Augustine noted that since inquirers were outsiders they might have indiscriminately picked up apocryphal texts or heterodox books or simply older Christian authors who, while orthodox in their own lifetime, held views out of step with contemporary standards. If they had happened upon such literature the catechist was to handle issues in a "modest con-

[48] *cat. rud.* 8.12 (CCL 46:133); trans. Canning, 80-81 (modified).
[49] *conf.* 8.2.4 (CCL 27:115). On Victorinus, see chap. 2.
[50] *cat. rud.* 8.12 (CCL 46:133); author's translation.
[51] Ibid.

versational way," avoiding as much as possible any "appeals to teaching authority."[52]

Augustine then took up how to handle those trained in "the run-of-the-mill schools of grammar and rhetoric."[53] Such men—and only men would have enjoyed such schooling—styled themselves as "educated." Augustine held no such opinion of them. He thought of them as dilettantes, ill-equipped to handle serious questions. He knew their ilk well, for he had had exactly the same sort of education as they, largely literary and rhetorical.[54] Such men might know only a smattering of philosophy, science, or history. They had studied—memorized would be more accurate—a handful of classics: Virgil, Cicero, Ovid, Terence. More important, they spoke "proper" Latin and not that of a commoner. And they had been trained—at the cost of beatings from the schoolmaster's cane—to purge from their speech all barbarisms or slang and to sprinkle their speech with phrases lifted from the classics. The ideal embodiment of this education was the orator, one who exercised magisterial control over his tongue and could sway any audience with the force of his words. When such men came as inquirers, they came exactly the way Augustine had when he first went to hear Ambrose: more attuned to style than content. And they, like the young Augustine, would have been especially dismissive of the uncultivated language found in the Old Latin translation of the Bible.[55] Such men sought wisdom only in classics whose language had appropriate sophistication and eloquence.

[52] *cat. rud.* 8.12 (CCL 46:134); author's translation.

[53] *cat. rud.* 9.13 (CCL 46:135); trans. Canning, 54.

[54] On education in the ancient world see Henri Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1958), 3–83; Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Catherine M. Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

[55] Augustine refers to his profound disappointment with the Old Latin (*Vetus Latina*) Bible in *conf.* 3.5.9 (CCL 27:30–31). More precisely, there were a variety of these translations. See Philip Burton, *The Old Latin Gospels: A Study*

Augustine recommended a tougher-minded approach when dealing with this sort. He advised Deogratias to warn them to cease giving "more value to a trained tongue than to a pure heart" and worry more about "avoiding flaws in character than flaws in speech." He encapsulated his advice in a sharp epigram: "It follows that they should listen more to truth-bearing words than elegant verbiage, just as they should prefer having very sensible friends more than good-looking ones."[56] Augustine also strongly advised that they be admonished not to scoff at the Bible:

> Above all these people must be taught to listen to the Scriptures in such a way as not to turn up their noses at its concrete language just because it doesn't satisfy their highbrow taste. Nor, when they read these books, should they think that the hidden sayings or human deeds wrapped up in carnal veils should be accepted at face value, "only as the letters sound," and not unraveled and opened up so as to be understood. We need to teach them about the exact benefit of Scripture's secrets—the very reason we also call them "mysteries"—that is, to teach them the value of hidden enigmas for sharpening one's longing for truth.[57]

The catechist, Augustine goes on to suggest, needed to give such candidates a first-hand experience of these mysteries, using allegory to "disentangle some knotty passage." Augustine thus suggested treating these men the way Ambrose had treated him: pique intellectual curiosity with scriptural riddles.

THE CATECHESIS: PRINCIPLES

Early readers would have situated Augustine's advice on catechesis against the rich and sophisticated traditions of classical

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of Their Texts and Language, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On the cultural issues see Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 473–77.

[56] *cat. rud.* 9.13 (CCL 46:135); author's translation.

[57] *cat. rud.* 9.13 (CCL 46:135), trans. Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 244.

rhetoric.[58] For us, "rhetoric" means "literary style" at best and, at worst, "empty artifice." And rhetoric, if it even remains in our curriculum, is associated with written composition and shorn almost completely of its original oral dimension. For ancients, being educated meant being a trained orator. The educated elite of the ancient world had spent long years refining performance skills and had at their fingertips an intricate and highly codified analytical vocabulary for measuring their own and others' performances. The closest parallel we have to such education is what classical musicians undergo—except that the performance and analysis of classical music is not our cultural ideal, whereas rhetorical performance and analysis was in the ancient world the standard against which one was measured. So to appreciate *On Catechizing* we need to digress a moment for an all-too-brief survey of a few rhetorical basics.

(1) THE CLASSICAL BACKGROUND

Augustine had been trained in and had taught in these schools of rhetoric. There, he would have mastered—and largely memorized—Cicero's *On Invention*, a widely used textbook on how to construct set speeches.[59] Augustine quotes this work a number of times and had taught from it and from Victorinus's commentary

[58] On this see George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Erik Gunderson, *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); William J. Dominik and Jon Hall, *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007).

[59] For the text, with translation, see Harry M. Hubbell, ed., *Cicero: De inventione*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949). On Cicero as rhetor and rhetorical theorist see Kennedy, *New History*, 117–21, 128–52; John Dugan, "Cicero's Rhetorical Theory," 25–40, and Catherine Steel, "Cicero, Oratory, and Public Life," 160–70 in *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*, ed. Catherine Steel (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On Augustine as a Ciceronian see Maurice Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1958); Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, Studia Graeca et Latina XX (Guteborg: Acta Universitatis Cothoburgensis, 1967); Maurice Testard, "Cicero," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1994): 913–30.

on it.[60] (Eulogius, a one-time student of Augustine, wrote his former teacher and recounted a dream he had had about Cicero's text, that Augustine had appeared in the dream and elucidated a particularly baffling passage.)[61] In this textbook Cicero focused mainly on just one type of speech, the "judicial," the sort delivered during a lawsuit or criminal case.[62] Following a longstanding Greek tradition, he insisted that a legal oration had six parts:

(a) The introduction (*exordium*), which should render the jury "well-disposed, attentive, and receptive."
(b) The narrative (*narratio*), which is "an exposition of events that have occurred," what we would call "the facts of the case."
(c) The division (*partitio*), which lays out where "we agree with our opponents and what is left in dispute."
(d) The proof (*confirmatio*), which analyzes the evidence and "marshals arguments" that "lend credit, authority, and support to our case."
(e) The refutation (*reprehensio*), which is "used to impair, disprove, or weaken the . . . proof in our opponents' speech."
(f) The conclusion (*peroratio*), which includes:
    (i) the summing-up (*enumeratio*) of one's case;
    (ii) the denunciation (*indignatio*)—that is, "the stirring up of ill-will against one's opponent";

[60] *lib. art.* 1.13.27; *mor.* 1.6.9; *s.* 150.8; *en. Ps.* 83.11; *doctr. chr.* 4.5.7, 4.25.55; *trin.* 14.11.14; *c. Iul.* 4.3.19. See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 1:157–59, 2:553–69.

[61] *cura mort.* 11.13 (BA 2:494–96). Here Augustine refers to *De inventione* by the title that ancients from Quintilian on had used: *Rhetorici libri*.

[62] Cicero, *De inventione* I.5.7 (Hubbell, LCL, 16–17), initially notes that the orator was expected to be proficient in three genres: "the epideictic, devoted to the praise and censure of a particular individual; the deliberative . . . at home in a political debate; . . . the judicial . . . at home in a court of law and involves accusation and defense or a claim and counter-plea." His focus in this treatise is mainly on the third. On this see John Hesk, "Types of Oratory," 145–61 in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*.

(iii) the final appeal (*conquestio*)—that is, "the rousing up of pity and sympathy" for one's client.[63]

This sort of speech, like any rhetorical work, had a dual aim: to convince the mind and to arouse the emotions. This dual aim shaped both tone and flow. The speech's introduction (*exordium*) and conclusion (*peroratio*) were aimed at winning the audience's heart, while its body (*narratio* and *confirmatio*) was for the purpose of establishing intellectual credibility for one's case.[64]

This six-part speech is only a textbook version. In actual practice, classical orations were much more complex, and the movement from one part to another was not so crisply articulated. In fact, to show the architecture of one's address too clearly was considered pedantic and artless. Yet this outline shaped standards and expectations. It, of course, guided the arrangement of actual legal speeches, but it had broken free from its moorings in the world of jurisprudence centuries earlier and had become a standard outline for formal debates and controversies of all sorts. And this technical vocabulary was standard parlance that ancients used to analyze their own declamations.

Set against this classical backdrop, the evangelical address Augustine describes takes on a new slant.[65] (See chart 3.) First, Deogratias's questions—where to begin the "narrative" and where

[63] Cicero, *De inventione* I.14.19, 15.20, 19.27, 22.31, 24.34, 42.78, 55.106 (Hubbell, LCL, 40–41, 54–55, 62–63, 68–69, 122–23, 156–57). On this see Catherine Steel, "Divisions of Speech," 77–91 in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*.

[64] Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 1.4-5 (Harris Rackham, ed., *Cicero: De oratore . . . De partitione oratoria*, LCL [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948], 312–13): "Two of [the parts], the statement of the facts [*narratio*] and the proof [*confirmatio*], serve to establish the case, and two, the *exordium* and the peroration, to influence the mind of the audience . . . What will be [the speaker's] aim? . . . To discover how to convince the person whom he wishes to persuade and how to arouse their emotions."

[65] On Augustine's use of this six-part outline see Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 59–69; on its role in *cat. rud.* see Etchegaray Cruz, "El *de Catechizandis Rudibus* y la metodología de la evangelización agustiniana," *Augustinus* 15 (1970): 361–65. Note *cat. rud.* 9.13 (CCL 46:135–36), where Augustine mentions explicit differences between the law courts and the

to end it—were about the structure of a set speech. Deogratias had used a technical term, "*narratio*," and Augustine, an ex-teacher of rhetoric, treated it as such. Second, Deogratias's questions concerned only a single part of a much larger oration. He had not asked Augustine's advice about, say, the refutation or the denunciation. Nonetheless, Augustine's advice would touch not only on the narrative but on these other parts as well. We saw earlier that Augustine had offered quite specific advice on the "introduction" (*exordium*): that it be crafted in response to the candidate's motives, whether those be fears or dreams or books.[66]

(2) THE NARRATIVE: MAKING THE CASE FOR CHRISTIANITY

In response to Deogratias's questions about the narrative, Augustine's answer was brief and to the point: "The narrative (*narratio*) is complete when the person is catechized from the text, 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth' down to the present time of the Church."[67] This advice seems overwhelming at first sight: How could the catechist be expected to survey the whole of biblical and church history in a single speech? Augustine counseled (obviously with tongue in cheek) against taking his recommendation too literally: "This does not require us, however, to reproduce word for word the entire Pentateuch . . . and the whole Gospel and Acts of the Apostles," even "assuming . . . we have learned these texts by heart."[68] Augustine insisted that the catechist be selective: on the one hand, give a comprehensive survey, and on

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church; that he is at pains to distinguish the two is one indicator of how dominant the judicial model was in his mind and those of his readers.

[66] *cat. rud.* 5.9, 6.10, 8.12, where he specifies how the *exordium* plays off candidates' responses.

[67] *cat. rud.* 3.5 (CCL 46:124); author's translation.

[68] *cat. rud.* 3.5 (CCL 46:124); trans. Canning, 63. The mention that one might have committed the entire Bible to memory might sound astounding, but such prodigious feats were routine in the ancient world. Educated ancients often knew the classics by heart, and educated Christians brought such skills to the Bible. See Catherine M. Chin, "Christians and the Roman Classroom: Memory, Grammar, and Rhetoric in *Confessions* X," *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002): 161–82.

the other, highlight "a certain number of quite remarkable events." Echoing Cicero, he suggested two criteria: first, things heard with greater pleasure; second, events that constituted pivotal moments in history. To explain this Augustine invoked the analogy of displaying an ancient and valuable scroll. One's narrative should flow along as though it were a precious parchment being slowly unrolled and spread out to view, so that one's audience might both examine it and admire its beauty. What guided this was a commonsense pedagogy: set out the key points in high relief; relegate details to the background. That way the "person we wish to rouse by the narrative" comes away remembering the essentials without leaving "the mind exhausted . . . or the memory confused."[69] The core concern was the audience: what might excite interest, what would enlighten the mind, what would not burden the memory.

Neither Augustine nor Deogratias would have thought of declaiming the *narratio* as simply "telling the story." The paradigm they worked from was judicial or forensic, and in that paradigm the *narratio* was a presentation of the facts of the case.[70] For Augustine, making the case for Christianity was demonstrated by the biblical history of salvation. Augustine's suggestion was largely a traditional one. Presenting the sweep of salvation history had long been a way Christian teachers made their case, for they were also heirs to another rhetorical tradition, that of Judaism.[71] In that tradition, one key way of arguing was to appeal to history, specifically covenantal history, for that history held authority: it traced the sequence of God's wondrous deeds and thus revealed God's identity and deepest intentions. Christian apologists from the New Testament on had taken over this traditional Jewish mode

[69] *cat. rud.* 3.5 (CCL 46:125); author's translation. See Cicero, *De partitione oratoria* 3.10.

[70] One need only read the *narratio* of Augustine's sample address (*cat. rud.* 17.28-24.44), where there is little in the way of storytelling and much in the way of argument. See the discussion below.

[71] On this blending of Jewish and Greek rhetorical styles in Christian preaching see Thomas K. Carroll, *Preaching the Word* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 9–37.

of argument and had even turned it against mainstream Judaism.[72] They asserted that, in Jesus, history received its definitive configuration. Jesus' death and resurrection marked a watershed and created a complex discontinuity-in-continuity within the history of the acts of God. One finds historical recitals of this sort in the speeches of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles and in the works of Christian apologists from Justin Martyr in the second century to Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth.[73] Augustine's innovative touch came from suggesting that the narrative extend "down to the present time of the church." Augustine argued, at least at this juncture in his career, that the Christian era also had a place on the map of salvation history, for it marked the time when ancient biblical prophecies came to fulfillment.[74]

Augustine then spelled out a deeper criterion that the catechist should use to pick and choose what events should be highlighted and how: "For no other purpose were all those things we read in the holy Scriptures written before the Lord's coming except to proclaim his coming and to prefigure the future church."[75] For

[72] On the emergence of Christian identity vis-à-vis Judaism see Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study in the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)*, trans. H. McKeating (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For the complex historiography see Andrew S. Jacobs, "Jews and Christians," 169–85 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*.

[73] On this see Frances M. Young, "Prelude: Jesus Christ, Foundation of Christianity," 1–36 in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1: *Origins to Constantine*, ed. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). On Justin see Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). On Eusebius see Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius'* Preparatio Evangelica, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). On Augustine's debt to this tradition see Markus, *Saeculum*, 7–9.

[74] Markus, *Saeculum* 32. On pp. 22–44 he traces the shifts in Augustine's thought on this, particularly the way he gradually distanced himself from the notion of a Christian empire.

[75] *cat. rud.* 3.6 (CCL 46:125); author's translation.

Augustine, Christ was the hinge joint of history, the one who joined Old and New Testaments; he was, to use Michael Cameron's apt phrase, the "bookbinder, the glue of Scriptural unity."[76] For Augustine, this meant that the Old Testament too told the Gospel story, and he encapsulated this perspective for Deogratias in one of his finest epigrams:

> In the Old Testament is concealed the New,
> in the New Testament is revealed the Old.
> *. . . in ueteri testamento est occultatio noui,*
> *in nouo testamento est manifestatio ueteris.*[77]

This articulates, in part, what Augustine had learned from Ambrose: the Old Testament was "prophecy," "type," "shadow." It enabled Augustine, as it had enabled Ambrose, to claim the antiquity of Christianity, that it had existed, albeit in hidden form, prior to and within Judaism. Even more important, this meant that one read the whole Bible with christological lenses, that flickering beneath the surface of Old Testament stories was the hidden story of Jesus.

Augustine then suggested what initially sounds like a second guiding thread in shaping this narrative: the twofold love of God and neighbor: "Keeping this love before you then as a goal to which you direct all that you say, recount every event in your historical exposition in such a way that your listener by hearing it may believe, by believing may hope, and by hoping may love."[78] Augustine argued that love formed the bedrock beneath the shifting sands of salvation history, "that on the two commandments of love for God and neighbor hinge the whole of scripture." This message spoke to the very depths of human psychology: "If then the dull heart is aroused when it feels itself loved, and the already passionate heart is stirred up still more when it realizes that its love is reciprocated, there is quite obviously no stronger motive

[76] Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 97. On Augustine's Christology in *cat. rud.*, see Cameron's discussion, pp. 240–50.

[77] *cat. rud.* 4.8 (CCL 46:128); trans. Canning, 70.

[78] *cat. rud.* 4.8 (CCL 46:129); trans. Canning, 72.

for love . . . than for the person who does not yet love to discover that he is loved."[79] This psychology, Augustine believed, explained why Scripture's message was so potent. The story of Scripture recounted the history of God's passionate love for humankind. This story became "good news" once the person who heard it began to taste that love and instinctively began to love God in return. Reading Scripture in terms of Christ and in terms of love sounds as though Augustine had two foci.[80] But as he saw it, these two were, in fact, one and the same, since Christ himself was the very embodiment of that love of God and of neighbor: "Thus, before all else, Christ came so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they would catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so they would also love their neighbor as he commanded and showed by his example—he who made himself their neighbor by loving them when they were not close to him but were wandering far from him."[81]

This, Augustine insisted, was the Christian message in a nutshell. He recommended that the theme of love bind together the catechist's speech "like the golden thread which holds together the precious stones in an ornament but does not spoil the ornament's lines *by making itself too obvious*."[82] His final phrase might seem surprising: Why should it *not* be obvious? The reason, according to Augustine and his contemporaries, was that one's oration was a work of art; that pedagogy, in part, followed aesthetic criteria. And the ancient aesthetic dictated a measure of subtlety. The classical maxim was: "To conceal the art *is* the art (*ars est celare artem*)."[83] This meant that transitions must be disguised, that the address as a whole must be, like a fugue, a seamless flow of hidden threads.

[79] *cat. rud.* 4.7 (CCL 46:127); trans. Canning, 68.

[80] *cat. rud.* 4.8 (CCL 46:128) implies two criteria: "everything that has since been committed to writing and invested with divine authority *tells of Christ* and *calls to love*" (trans. Canning, 70).

[81] *cat. rud.* 4.8 (CCL 46:128); trans. Canning, 70.

[82] *cat. rud.* 6.10 (CCL 46:131); trans. Canning, 77.

[83] On this ancient aesthetic see Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 10.

The theme of love was to undergird whatever one said, but subtly, without being overly conspicuous.

(3) EXHORTATION AND END TIME

Augustine then took up Deogratias's final question: whether the narrative should close with an exhortation. His answer was yes, admonition and exhortation should follow upon and flow from the narrative.[84] While Cicero had not included exhortation as a formal element within his outline, exhortatory digressions were both common and expected.[85] This closing exhortation, as Augustine presents it, had features that both resembled and transfigured Ciceronian turns.

Augustine advised that the exhortation focus on the Christian vision of the future, flowing naturally from a narrative focused on the scriptural past and the ecclesial present. This resembles Cicero's formula for political speeches (as opposed to judicial ones). In political speeches the orator first presents a narrative (*narratio*) outlining the facts, whether past or present, then makes a persuasive argument (*suasio*) setting out his vision for the city's future. The future Cicero had in mind was political; the future Augustine envisioned was eschatological. The catechist, Augustine advised, is to describe "how the Last Judgment which is to come will be good towards the good, harsh toward the wicked, impartial toward

[84] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:131).

[85] Cicero, *De inventione* I.51.97 (Hubbell, LCL, 146). Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 94, notes that "ironically ethical digressions [between the *reprehensio* and the *peroratio*] . . . are very characteristic of his greatest judicial speeches." A whole speech could be an "exhortation." A genre that bears close resemblance to the oration described in *cat. rud.* is the *protrepticus*, an introductory lecture given by a philosopher calling his hearers to make a conversion to the philosophic way of life. The most famous example of this was Aristotle's *Protrepticus* (unfortunately lost). Clement of Alexandria had adapted this genre to Christian purposes, making his *Protrepticus* (*Exhortation to the Greeks*) a call to enter the Christian way of life. Cicero had composed such a *protrepticus*, the *Hortensius*, and this had a profound effect on Augustine. On the *Hortensius* see Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 19–48; Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2:486–97; Karin Schlapbach, "Hortensius," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2006): 425–36.

all."[86] In that final future, praise and blame come not from the orator's judgment but from God's. The Christian idea that history ends with a last judgment would have been alien to most pagans. While some harbored notions of immortality, such views were hardly central to pagan religiosity.[87]

Augustine then suggested a second element in this exhortation: "We should take up the discussion of the resurrection of the body as a counter to the groundless derision of unbelievers."[88] This element was a Christian equivalent of the Ciceronian refutation (*reprehensio*) of the opponent's case. Augustine knew that the resurrection of the flesh was *the* stock objection of pagans: "In no other thing is the Christian faith challenged so vehemently, so tenaciously, so vigorously and combatively as is the belief in the resurrection of the flesh."[89] Christian apologists from the second century onward had forged a repertoire of arguments to defend it, and these formed a stock element of Christian apologetic.[90] Augustine routinely treated this doctrine in sermons and later explored it at length at the close and climax of his great apologetic work, *City of God*.[91] To Deogratias he advised that the resurrection of the body be handled from the very outset, first, because it could be a stumbling block for newcomers and, second, because it held such significance in the Christian vision of human destiny.

[86] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:131); trans. Canning, 77.

[87] Ramsey MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 53–57.

[88] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:131); trans. Canning, 77.

[89] *en. Ps.* 88.2.5 (CCL 39:1237); author's translation. For Augustine's perspectives see Henri Marrou, *The Resurrection and Saint Augustine's Theology of Human Values*, St. Augustine Lecture 1965 (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1966); Tarmo Toom, "*Totus Homo:* Augustine on Resurrection," 59–76 in *Resurrection & Responsibility*, ed.Keith D. Dyer and David J. Neville (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

[90] See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, 2d ed. (2003; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010).

[91] *ciu. dei* 22.11-30 (CCL 48:829–66). Cf. *en. Ps.* 84-7; *s.* 241.1, 242.4, 264.6.

Augustine then recommended a third element in the exhortation. The catechist needed to arm candidates against "temptations and scandals, whether from outside or from within the Church itself; outside we face pagans, or Jews, or heretics, while inside we come up against the chaff on the Lord's threshing floor."[92] This element resembles the Ciceronian denunciation (*indignatio*) of one's opponents at the close of one's speech. Augustine's suggestion here was not only rhetorical but pastoral. He knew new converts needed encouragement to face down peer pressure. As he noted in one sermon, "Persecution has not ceased even now. Wherever pagans come across a Christian, they make sure to insult him. They taunt Christians, calling them 'stupid, dull, heartless good-for-nothings.' "[93] Other jibes included: "devotee of a crucified man, worshipper of an executed criminal."[94] When rains were absent at planting time the cry was "Blame the Christians"; when floods came at harvest time the cry was again "Blame the Christians."[95]

While outside pressures continued, problems inside the church concerned Augustine even more. He catalogued for Deogratias a litany of vices of those who "physically occupy the churches": "drunkards, misers, cheats, gamblers, adulterers, fornicators, lovers of entertainments, healers using sacrilegious amulets, chanters of spells, astrologers, soothsayers."[96] When pagans saw such types, they resorted to irony: "Behold the Christians."[97] And, as Augustine complained in one sermon, "If anyone exhorts a pagan to believe, the answer comes back: 'So you want me to be like so-and-so?' "[98] His strategy of warning inquirers about scandalous Christians may strike us as realistic and honest, but his rhetoric was unusual, at least for North Africa. His North African theological

[92] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:131); trans. Canning, 77–78.

[93] *en. Ps.* 34.2.8 (CCL 38:317–18); author's translation.

[94] *en. Ps.* 68.1.12 (CCL 39:912); trans. Boulding, WSA III/17:378.

[95] *en. Ps.* 80.1 (CCL 39:1120); author's translation. Augustine mentions that this complaint "is quite an old one"; he seems to echo Tertullian's reports (*Apologeticum* 40.2); cf. *ciu. dei* 2.3.3.

[96] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:132); trans. Canning, 78.

[97] *s.* 5.8 (CCL 41:59); author's translation.

[98] *s.* 15.6 (CCL 41:198); author's translation. Cf. *en. ps.* 25.14.

predecessor, Cyprian, echoing Paul's language in the letter to the Ephesians, had stressed that the church was the bride of Christ, without wrinkle or spot. For Augustine, purity was reserved for the end-time. The church here and now may be the Body of Christ, but it remained a "mixed-up body" (*corpus permixtum*) and a "threshing floor" on which lay an unsifted mix of "wheat and chaff."[99]

Exhortation included praise as well as blame, summons to do good as well as to avoid evil. According to Cicero an oration was to end with a final impassioned plea meant to rouse the audience and lead them to decision (*conquestio*). Augustine, in a similar vein, encouraged the candidate to come to decision, to look for God's grace at the deepest root of his or her quest. While a convert may admire and want to imitate exemplary Christians, the person needed to savor that "when we follow this path, we are justified by the God who justifies them." The quest, in the end, was about the gift—the grace—of love: the convert "is to love himself and us, and all the others whom he holds dear as friends, in the One and because of the One who has loved him as an enemy so as to justify him and make him a friend."[100]

THE CATECHIST: CULTIVATING DELIGHT

Deogratias thought his most pressing problem lay in inadequate method, that what he needed was better strategies for pitching his message. Augustine disagreed: "No, my greatest concern is . . . that those who catechize do so with joy."[101] He sympathized with Deogratias's feelings of discouragement and admitted that he too was "nearly always dissatisfied" with his talks. Augustine's first impulse was to blame this on the gap between his inner intuition, that "sudden flash of light" that "floods the mind," and his self-expression, which of necessity trickled out in a slow, drawn-out

[99] This terminology and imagery was central to Augustine's vision of the church, which, as we will see, was forged especially in his dispute with the Donatists. See chapter 5.

[100] *cat. rud.* 7.11 (CCL 46:132); trans. Canning, 79.

[101] *cat. rud.* 2.4 (CCL 46:124); author's translation.

stream of words. To combat his propensity for self-criticism he relied on others' judgment: "For me, the enthusiasm of those who want to hear me is often an indication that my speech is not as dull as I think." So he advised Deogratias: "The same applies to you. The very fact that people who are to receive their initial grounding in faith are repeatedly brought to you should make you realize that others do not find your words as dissatisfying as you do."[102]

Hilaritas, "cheerfulness," was so essential that Augustine devoted several chapters of *On Catechizing* to diagnosing what derailed it and suggesting counterstrategies for recovering it. Here we see Augustine's psychological acumen at close range. The first problem he cites is boredom: "Because the topics that candidates have to be introduced to are now so familiar to us and no longer necessary for our own progress, it irks us to go back to them so often. And our heart, having outgrown them, no longer moves with pleasure along such well-worn and, as it were, childish paths."[103] To counteract such feelings the catechist needed to take Paul's advice to heart: imitate Christ who "'emptied himself, taking on the form of a slave' (Phil 2:6)"; imitate Paul who "made himself 'a little child in our midst, like a wet-nurse attending to the needs of her children' (1 Thes 2:7)." Augustine drew on parental images: be like a father who "at love's urging murmurs unfinished and mishmashed words"; be like a mother who "chews food into tiny pieces" and then places "them in her little son's mouth."[104] Augustine took seriously the idea of the Christian community as family and framed the evangelical task in familial terms: "Now if we feel disgusted because we are so often repeating things geared to the little ones, familiar things, let us equip ourselves with a brother's or a father's or a mother's love, and by linking our hearts to theirs, those things will again seem new to us."[105]

[102] *cat. rud.* 2.3-4 (CCL 46:122–23); trans. Canning, 55–57.
[103] *cat. rud.* 10.14 (CCL 46:136–37); author's translation.
[104] *cat. rud.* 10.15 (CCL 46:138); trans. Canning, 92–93 (modified).
[105] *cat. rud.* 12.17 (CCL 46:141); author's translation, *AOW*, 145.

Augustine urged that the catechist not simply condescend to the needs of newcomers but do so with "delight" (*delectatio*). To illustrate it, he invoked the analogy of taking a friend on a tour:

> Isn't it quite common that when we show certain beautiful, spacious locales, whether in town or out in the countryside, to those who have never seen them before, we who have been in the habit of passing them by without any enjoyment find our own delight renewed by their delight at the novelty of it all? And how much more enjoyable the closer our friendship, because as we come together more and more through this bond of love, what had gotten old becomes new to us all over again. . . . How much more then ought we to rejoice when people now approach to learn of God Himself . . . and how much more ought we to be renewed in their newness, so that if our preaching, now a routine, has cooled off, it may again catch fire because of our hearers.[106]

He believed that this "bond of love" had unexpected effects: "For so great is this feeling of compassion that when people are touched by us as we speak and we by them as they learn, we each dwell in the other, and so it is as if they speak in us what they hear while we, in some way, learn in them what it is we teach."[107] Augustine took this reciprocity between teacher and learner seriously and made it a routine theme in his catechesis.[108]

A second cause of discouragement or anxiety was fear of criticism. As we saw, newcomers trained in rhetoric were prone to mock anything but the most pristine speech. This could provoke stage fright. So, Augustine suggested, if a slip of the tongue betrayed less-than-perfect oratory the very error itself might teach that what mattered was truth, not eloquence. Others might fear not oratorical fumbling but doctrinal imprecision, even error. Augustine advised that one accept this as a test from God, "to see whether we would accept correction with equanimity." Finally,

[106] *cat. rud.* 12.17 (CCL 46:141); author's translation, *AOW*, 145–46.

[107] *cat. rud.* 12.17 (CCL 46:141); author's translation, *AOW*, 145.

[108] For example, *doctr. chr.* 4.29.62; *s.* 216.1-2. See the discussion in chaps. 4 and 6.

even if one's speech was adequate and one's theology exact, one might still fear rejection. So Augustine cautioned that the Christian message, because of its novelty, could appear harsh and offend certain hearers. Such rejection was not without precedent; Christ too had seen his catechesis rejected.[109]

A third problem was an unresponsive audience: "When we see no reaction from our hearer, it is really tiring to continue speaking right to the end of the allocated time."[110] Ancient audiences were noisy and expressed "approval either by word or by some gesture," that is, by applause or cheers. Not unlike the "Amen" one hears in certain evangelical churches, applause or cheers could signal either agreement or simply understanding (that hearers followed the train of thought) or appreciation (that they enjoyed a clever turn of phrase).[111] Ancient orators could thus gauge their effectiveness immediately and publicly. In this milieu it was natural that an orator might feel that a silent audience meant disapproval, that one's talk was worthless.

Augustine, drawing on long experience, warned against this hasty interpretation. There could be other reasons: perhaps inquirers were in the thrall of religious fear or held back by shyness; perhaps they did not understand what was said or they were simply tired. After all, Augustine counseled, one could not see into another's mind. Effort had to be made to "rouse him and, as it were, pluck him from his hiding place."[112] One needed to switch methods from lecture to question and answer. If inquirers were shy, one should introduce the idea of fellowship. If they already knew all this, one should be brief. If they did not understand, one should speak more simply. If a person happened to be "exceptionally dull" one "should bear with him in a compassionate spirit" and "should say much on his behalf to God rather than saying much to

[109] *cat. rud.* 11.16 (CCL 46:139–40); trans. Canning, 94, 95–96.

[110] *cat. rud.* 13.18 (CCL 46:142); trans. Canning, 99.

[111] Augustine's sermons were regularly interrupted by applause and acclamations: *s.* 67.1, 151.8, 163B.5 (= *s. Frangip.* 5), 313B.3 (= *s. Denis* 15). See the discussion of this in chap. 4.

[112] *cat. rud.* 13.18 (CCL 46:142); trans. Canning, 99.

him about God."[113] If the person "opens his mouth no longer to express approval but to yawn," then one should use good humor, or a spicy turn of phrase, or invoke an allegory that "arouses awe and astonishment"—or simply offer the person a chair.[114] This final suggestion might seem strange: Why wasn't the audience seated in the first place? In antiquity the procedure was the opposite of our own: teachers sat, students stood. Augustine's suggestion, however pragmatic, was untraditional, and he took pains to justify it. He offered an ecclesial argument (churches elsewhere in the empire had their audiences seated) and a biblical one (that Mary had sat at the feet of Jesus when he taught).[115]

He cited other sources of discouragement. There was the upset that came from interruptions. In this case one needed to adjust one's attitude, to see that it was God's schedule, not one's own, that counted, that what might seem an annoyance could in fact be a token of God's loving providential order, and that one needed to act accordingly.[116] Then there was the problem that came with bad timing, with a candidate arriving just as one got news of some scandal. In this case one needed to let the joy over new gains alleviate grief over losses, tap into the grief itself and let it fuel the fervor of one's words.[117] The deeper issue through all this was self-awareness and attunement to others, for "fluent and cheerful words will then stream out from an abundance of love and be drunk in pleasure."[118]

THE CATECHESIS: EXAMPLES

In the second half of *On Catechizing*, Augustine puts theory into practice and offers two model addresses. He first opens with a few prefatory remarks. He notes that his sample addresses had "a future reader in mind" and were a far cry from "speaking when the

[113] *cat. rud.* 13.18 (CCL 46:142); trans. Canning, 100.
[114] *cat. rud.* 13.19 (CCL 46:142–43); trans. Canning, 100.
[115] *cat. rud.* 13.19 (CCL 46:143).
[116] *cat. rud.* 14.20 (CCL 46:144–45).
[117] *cat. rud.* 14.21 (CCL 46:145–46).
[118] *cat. rud.* 14.22 (CCL 46:146); trans. Canning, 107–8.

listener is actually present." Spontaneity was central: "I can testify to you from my own experience that I am swayed now in one way, now in another, according to the person that I see before me."[119] He reminded Deogratias of things an orator took for granted. First, one had to gear one's words to the audience—to their education, age, sex, social standing, place of origin—and if the audience was mixed, one had to intuit their unique chemistry. Second, different settings dictated different styles of discourse. What was appropriate to a one-to-one chat was inappropriate to a public sermon, and vice versa. Augustine indicated settings he used. Sometimes this first catechesis took place privately, sometimes with a single candidate but overheard by others, sometimes from the bishop's chair in the basilica while "the crowd remains silent and all eyes are attentively fixed" on the speaker.[120] Third, Augustine notes that it is important that, along with the words, one uses "certain facial expressions that, as it were, disclose the frame of mind of the speaker and affect the audience in various ways."[121] Here Augustine alludes to a key subdiscipline within ancient rhetoric: the delivery (*pronuntiatio*). This art included control of voice (*vocis figura*) as well as gesture and facial expression (*corporis motus*).[122] Great care was taken that one's body complemented, indeed choreographed, the play of words and emotions. Finally, Augustine, who trusted living models more than rule books, offered to apprentice Deogratias: "You will learn more by watching and listening to me putting these principles into practice than by reading what I now dictate."[123]

Augustine then set out two sample addresses. The first is of considerable length and intricacy, the second a bare-bones summary. In what follows I will focus solely on the first. Augustine geared it

[119] *cat. rud.* 15.23 (CCL 46:147–48); trans. Canning, 112.

[120] *cat. rud.* 15.23 (CCL 46:147); trans. Canning, 112.

[121] *cat. rud.* 15.23 (CCL 46:147); author's translation.

[122] On this see Steel, "Divisions of Speech," 86–88; also James Porter, "Rhetoric, Aesthetics, and the Voice," 92–108 in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric*.

[123] *cat. rud.* 15.23 (CCL 46:148); trans. Canning, 113.

toward "the kind of person that you must come across again and again in Carthage": a townsman who lacked education.[124] In his earlier advice to Deogratias he stressed that the *exordium* should take a candidate's background and motives into account. Here he puts principle into practice, with words that mix warmth and warning and include a bad pun on Deogratias's name:

> Thanks be to God, brother (*Deo gratias, frater*)! I warmly congratulate you and rejoice on your account that in the midst of the huge and dangerous storms of this world you have turned your mind to a form of security that is real and dependable. For even in this life people expend great efforts in their search for rest and security, but because of their corrupt desires they do not find them. For they wish to find rest in things that are not at rest, in things that do not last; and because these things are taken away by time and pass out of existence, they torment those people with fears and anxieties and allow them no rest.[125]

Augustine illustrated his point with some vivid snapshots of ancient Carthage. He traced how simple men squandered their meager savings and plunged into a life of crime, becoming burglars or highwaymen. This offered them no peace. While at night they sang drunkenly in bars, their sleep was haunted by nightmares of jail. Even more telling, according to Augustine, was the behavior seen in the stadium, where mobs cheer and jeer and "rage like madmen" at the poor men forced to battle each other as gladiators or pitted against wild animals. Augustine drew the moral: city life with its theaters and brothels, its taverns and baths, offered only illusions of happiness. He then turned to the townsman and commended him for abandoning such short-lived and empty follies: "You, however, are seeking the true rest which is promised to Christians after this life, and therefore it will be for you to taste its

[124] *cat. rud.* 16.24 (CCL 46:148); trans. Canning, 114. In other words, these are *not* geared to those he had discussed at length earlier, such as the educated or the wrongly motivated.

[125] *cat. rud.* 16.24 (CCL 46:148–49); trans. Canning. 115.

sweetness and delight even here amid the most bitter troubles of this life if you love the commandment of him who has promised it."[126]

In this *exordium* Augustine had his eye on Cicero's classic requirements: to make the listener "well-disposed, attentive, and receptive" by commending his wisdom and purity of purpose.[127] He used one of Cicero's stock tactics: showing one's opponents as "base, haughty, cruel, or malicious" and deserving contempt for "their laziness, carelessness, sloth, indolent pursuits or luxurious idleness,"[128] and he held it together with a single theme, true rest—the very theme that bookends *Confessions*.[129]

This theme of rest becomes the segue for the narrative: "It is this rest that is meant by scripture when it expressly mentions that, from the beginning of the world when God made heaven and earth and everything that is in them he worked for six days and on the seventh day he rested."[130] Immediately Augustine anticipates objections: If God is truly all-powerful, then why did it take six days to create the world? And why, in any case, should God have to labor at all? So he insists: "All-powerful as he is, he could indeed have made everything even in a single instant. . . . It was not that he worked in order to rest but rather so as to give symbolic expression to the fact that, after the six ages of this world, in the seventh age as on the seventh day, God will rest in his saints."[131] In this overview of the world's creation Augustine gives the narrative of Genesis short shrift. The story of the creation and fall is sketched in a few quick strokes. He focuses little on

[126] *cat. rud.* 16.25 (CCL 46:151); trans. Canning, 118–19.

[127] Cicero, *De inventione* I.15.20 (Hubbell, LCL, 40–41).

[128] Cicero, *De inventione* I.16.22 (Hubbell, LCL, 44–45).

[129] *conf.* 1.1.1 (CCL 27:1), with the opening paragraph's famous line ("our hearts are restless until they rest in You"); 13.38.53 (CCL 27:273), in the final sentence ("we hope to rest in your great sanctification. But you, the Good, in need of no other good, are ever at rest since you yourself are your own rest"). See Goulven Madec, "Le bonheur et le repos," *La première catéchèse*, 253–56; O'Donnell, *Confessions*, 2:13.

[130] *cat. rud.* 17.28 (CCL 46:152); trans. Canning, 121.

[131] *cat. rud.* 17.28 (CCL 46:152–53); trans. Canning, 121–22.

the story and more on what it says about God and about us: that God is "good and just and merciful"; that we are made in God's image and thus reign over the earth as God reigns over the whole of creation. Again Augustine anticipates objections: Why would an all-knowing God create an imperfect creature? And how could such a God be all-powerful if the devil had the power to seduce the first couple? Against these objections Augustine insists: human beings were created to be free; the first couple fell freely; God foresaw the Fall and, like a just judge, meted out just deserts.[132] This is clearly not narrative in our sense of it: a story. It is a narrative in the traditional rhetorical sense: an argument framed positively in defense of Christian views and negatively in opposition to possible detractors.

Augustine had earlier suggested that Old Testament events be chosen and portrayed as foreshadowings of the New Testament. In the sample address he does just that. He notes that in Noah's time the righteous were saved from the great flood by the wood of the ark. This symbolically anticipates that the just in the church, by clinging to the wood of the cross, have been rescued from sinking in the flood of the world.[133] In describing the Passover, Augustine stresses that the sacrifice of the paschal lamb anticipates Christ's passion, while the marking of the doorpost with lamb's blood anticipates the rite of entering the catechumenate itself: "With the sign of his passion and cross you are today to be marked on the forehead—your doorpost, so to speak."[134] In describing the Exodus he notes that the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea while Israel crossed over, foreshadowing "holy baptism by means of which the faithful pass over into a new life while their sins are brought to nothing and destroyed like enemies."[135] He then tells the candidate explicitly: read the Old Testament as "spiritual mysteries closely associated with Christ and the Church."[136]

[132] *cat. rud.* 18.29-30 (CCL 46:153–55).
[133] *cat. rud.* 19.32, 20.34 (CCL 46:156–57, 158).
[134] *cat. rud.* 20.34 (CCL 46:159); trans. Canning, 135.
[135] *cat. rud.* 20.34 (CCL 46:158); trans. Canning, 135.
[136] *cat. rud.* 19.33 (CCL 46:158); trans. Canning, 133.

Augustine had also recommended that the *narratio* be woven, though unobtrusively, around the theme of love. Here again he puts principle into practice. At the outset he notes that God "created all things through his Word, and his Word is the Christ" and that "we are saved by believing that he would come; thus it is that we should love the God who so loved us that he sent his only Son."[137] The theme resurfaces toward the end, in his thumbnail sketch of church history. There, it winds its way through the recital, linking various threads: the love poured forth by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the disciples; the Decalogue reduced to the twofold commandment of love of God and neighbor; the earliest Christians as a community of love who express their love through a selfless gathering of their material resources.[138]

These two threads lie just beneath the surface, appearing in passing remarks and brief digressions. Two other frameworks more overtly order the narrative's architecture: (i) the two cities and (ii) the seven ages. He introduces the first of these early on: "And so there are two cities, one of the wicked, the other of the saints, cities that existed from the beginnings of the human race and so on down to the end of the ages. Now they are mixed together physically, in terms of bodies, but are separate in wills, and on Judgment Day, will be separated in body as well."[139] This theme was one of Augustine's favorites. It appears, most famously, about a decade later as the blueprint for his epic *City of God*.[140] Augustine thought this scheme offered a template for reading the vast scope of human history. He used it repeatedly in works geared either to pagans or in polemical debate against them. It appeared in his earliest

[137] *cat. rud.* 17.28 (CCL 46:153); trans. Canning, 122–23.

[138] *cat. rud.* 23.41-43 (CCL 46:165-168).

[139] *cat. rud.* 19.31 (CCL 46:156); author's translation, *AOW*, 319. On the "two cities" theme see Antonin Lauras and Henri Rondet, "Le thème des deux cités dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin," 97–160 in *Études Augustiniennes*, ed. Henri Rondet, Théologie 28 (Paris: Aubier, 1953); Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

[140] *ciu. dei* 11.1, 14.28-28, 15.1 (CCL 48:321–22, 451–54).

apologetic work, *On True Religion*, and repeatedly in his sermons.[141] This sort of dualism had long held pride of place in the catechesis of new converts. The *Didache*, one of the earliest Christian documents outside the New Testament, had counseled teachers to set out for converts the stark polarities of the "two ways," the "way of life" and the "way of death."[142] Augustine's genius appears in his intermingling of the two ways, how in this life the good mixes with the bad, how life here and now is messy and gray, how as a Christian one has to find one's way through the ambiguities.

In *On Catechizing,* this "two cities" theme comes center stage when Augustine describes the two archetypal cities: Jerusalem and Babylon. Both have names whose etymologies reveal their inner character: "the word 'Jerusalem' . . . means 'vision of peace' " while Babylon "means 'confusion' "; and "just as Jerusalem is symbolic of the city and society of the saints, so Babylon is symbolic of the city and society of the wicked."[143] For Augustine the historical circumstances of the Old Testament story were revealing: "Jerusalem was captured, and a large part of it was led off into Babylon." This he interpreted figuratively: "Now all this has a symbolic meaning and refers figuratively to when Christ's church, in all its saints who are heavenly Jerusalem's citizens, lives in bondage under the kings of this world."[144] This bondage and exilic experience of the saints reverberated down to the present of his hearers: Christians pay taxes; they submit to the vagaries of the Roman state and the inequities of the social order. He added: even now

[141] *uera. rel.* 27.50 (BA 8:90–94). Among his sermons see especially the recently discovered *s.* 299A.8 (= *s. Dolbeau* 4); also *en. Ps.* 64.2, 84.10; *Gn. litt.* 11.15.20.

[142] *Didache* 1.1–6.2. On this see Aaron Milavec, ed., *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 12–27 (text and translation), 53–172 (commentary). See also Clayton N. Jefford, *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History, and Transmission*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 77 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[143] *cat. rud.* 20.36, 21.37 (CCL 46:160, 161); author's translation, *AOW*, 320.

[144] *cat. rud.* 21.37 (CCL 46:161); author's translation, *AOW*, 320–21.

"earthly kings" were "forsaking idols for the sake of which they once persecuted Christians" and were fulfilling the ancient prophecies of Jeremiah: "And so through these kings peace was given to the church—admittedly, a temporary one, a temporary tranquility for building, in a spiritual sense, homes and planting gardens and vineyards. . . . And this is being done across the entire globe as a result of the peace of Christian kings."[145] This "two cities" theme gave a moral edge to the *narratio*. Augustine stressed, for example, that Christ was born in an insignificant village; this undercut any inflated patriotism, whether local or imperial: God "showed that he did not wish anyone to boast about the grandeur of any earthly city"[146]

Another theme, "the seven ages," also figures prominently. This idea was a traditional one.[147] According to Augustine's (and the traditional) framework, the Old Testament recorded five ages: (i) from Adam to Noah; (ii) from Noah to Abraham; (iii) from Abraham to David; (iv) from David to the Babylonian captivity; (v) from the return of the exiles to the Incarnation. Augustine's concern was the sixth age, the age of the coming of Christ and the church. As he saw it, it marked a caesura in the map of salvation history: "In this sixth age the human spirit will be renewed in accordance with the image of God, just as on the sixth day human beings were created in accordance with the image of God."[148] Within his description of this sixth age Augustine summarizes the good news of Christ, mapping it out with a sequence of paradoxes:

> He knew hunger, he who provides food for all.
> He knew thirst, he through whom all drink is created
> and who, in a spiritual sense, is bread for all who are hungry
> and spring-water for those who are thirsty.

[145] *cat. rud.* 21.37 (CCL 46:162); author's translation. *AOW*, 321.

[146] *cat. rud.* 22.40 (CCL 46:165); trans. Canning, 146.

[147] On this traditional scheme see Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 278–95. On Augustine's use of it see Markus, *Saeculum*, 17–18; Madec, "L'histoire du salut," *La première catéchèse*, 244–53.

[148] *cat. rud.* 22.39 (CCL 46:164); trans. Canning, 146.

He was exhausted by his travels on earth,
he who made himself for us the way to heaven.
In the presence of revilers he became as one incapable of speech and hearing,
he through whom the dumb spoke and the deaf heard.
He was bound fast,
he who freed the infirm from their bonds.
He was scourged,
he who banished every scourge of pain from people's bodies.
He was crucified,
he who put an end to our crosses.
He died, he who raised the dead to life.
But he is also risen, never to die again.[149]

Reveling in paradox had long been integral to Christian hymns and liturgy and appears repeatedly from the earliest Christian writers (Ignatius of Antioch, Melito of Sardis) down to Augustine's older contemporaries (Ephrem the Syrian, Gregory of Nazianzus).[150] Such language set the central Christian mysteries in high relief and could be easily memorized—an urgent need if one had an illiterate audience. Augustine here exploits this tradition to great effect. He weaves an intricate combination of rhetorical figures and verbal sonorities so that in his hands the language of the Christian kerygma verges on poetry. Augustine's (and his contemporaries') point was to savor the startling poetics of divine self-revelation.

Narrative then shifts unobtrusively to exhortation. Augustine first turns—just as he had recommended earlier—to the last judgment, joining it to his "two cities" motif: on the "last day, the day

[149] *cat. rud.* 22.40 (CCL 46:165); trans. Canning, 147.

[150] Remarkable parallels to this passage appear in Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on the Nativity* 11.5-8 (SC 459:172–73), and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 29.20 (SC 250:220). Augustine's familiarity with Gregory's thought remains a matter of dispute; also, Rufinus of Aquileia's translation of Gregory into Latin postdates this period. Such a chain of paradoxes was memorable and could easily be passed on via oral tradition—hence such similar wording in three different languages and in three quite distant locales.

of judgment, when all the citizens of the two cities, having regained possession of their bodies, will rise up and give an account of their lives before the judgment seat of Christ the judge."[151] He then defends the doctrine of bodily resurrection—again as he said he would—putting forward arguments not by direct rebuttal but by a series of rhetorical questions:

> A few years ago, indeed, before you were born, where was that great bulk which is your body, and where were the shape and composition of the limbs? Before you were conceived in your mother's womb, where was your body's bulk and stature? Didn't the body, shaped as it was in secret by the Lord God, come into the light from the hidden and mysterious parts of this creation, and didn't it develop its present dimensions through regular growth throughout the various stages of life? If God in an instant can draw the cloudbanks together from their concealment and cover the sky with them in a split second, is it then really so difficult for God to restore your body's greatness as it was, when he was able to make it such when it was not?[152]

Then, much as a symphonist gathers up earlier themes and brings them to a crescendo, so does Augustine at the end of his address. He recapitulates themes from both introduction and narrative—the two cities, the seven ages, love of God and neighbor, eternal rest—and in summing up, moves to an emotional crescendo: "Blaze with love and desire for the eternal life of the saints"; taste the promised rest, the rewards of the seventh age. Augustine also sketches the topology of end-time: in the City of God, "activity will be effortless and rest will not be idle"; "God will be the complete delight and fullness of the holy city" where "we shall then enjoy by sight that Trinity . . . no longer to shout out this profession of faith using noisy words but to drink in the reality in an act of the most pure and fervent contemplation in that place of silence."[153] Augustine warns darkly of "drunkards, misers,

[151] *cat. rud.* 24.45 (CCL 46:169); trans. Canning, 154.
[152] *cat. rud.* 25.46 (CCL 46:169–70); trans. Canning, 155–56.
[153] *cat. rud.* 25.47 (CCL 46:170–71); trans. Canning, 157–58.

cheats, gamblers, fornicators," those who "fill the churches on the Christian feast days," then "fill the theaters on the feast days of the pagans."[154] Finally, he begs the new candidate—as he said he would—to "mix with good people, with those whom you see loving your king together with you," to put hope not in their goodness, "but only in the One who through the work of justification makes both them and you the kind of person you are."[155]

Augustine reminded Deogratias that, after this very first catechesis, candidates were to be asked whether they believe these things and desire to put them into practice. If so, they should be "marked with the sign of the cross in the usual way" and "according to the custom of the Church."[156] This ceremony signaled their entrance into the catechumenate. However, what exactly that ceremony included—besides a signing of the cross on the forehead—is unclear.[157] Whatever the precise words and gestures, Augustine saw them as a momentous step. In his sermons he routinely reminded his congregation that the sign of the cross had been "tat-

[154] *cat. rud.* 25.48 (CCL 46:171–72); trans. Canning, 159–60.

[155] *cat. rud.* 25.49 (CCL 46:172–73); trans. Canning, 161.

[156] *cat. rud.* 26.50 (CCL 46:173); trans. Canning, 163.

[157] Christopher, in his widely used ACW translation, follows the conjecture of the Maurists that *cat. rud.* 26.50 read as "*De sacramento salis quod accipit . . .*" (ACW 2:82: "As to the sacrament of salt which he receives"); see his comment, p. 146n315. Goulven Madec, *La première catéchèse*, 266, has pointed out that there is no manuscript support for this; the text properly reads: "*De sacramento sane quod accipit . . .*" ("Certainly concerning the sacrament he receives . . ."). What precisely that "sacrament" is, is unclear. Does it refer solely to the sign of the cross on the forehead? Were there other elements to the rite? Busch, *De initiatione*, 48–59, attempted a reconstruction, claiming that it included an *exsufflatio* (a breathing meant to exorcize demonic influence); this is hinted at in *Cres.* 2.5.7. There may also have been a taste of salt. In *pecc. mer.* 2.26.42, Augustine says "that which catechumens receive, which is not the body of Christ, is nevertheless holy because it is a sacrament." This oblique comment seems to refer to catechumens receiving salt. But was that given in the reception rite? It is not clear, but we know that a "sacrament of salt" was given regularly to catechumens, as mentioned in Canon 5 of the Council of Hippo (CCL 149:330); also *conf.* 1.11.17. On this see Madec, "Le rite catéchumenal," *La première catéchèse*, 265–67.

tooed" on their foreheads, that they had thus been set apart and now belonged to Christ.[158] In his sermons he interpreted these first rites as the candidates' "moment of conception." As he remarked in one recently discovered sermon: "Catechumens [are] not yet born, yet [are] already conceived. But when or how would they have been conceived in the womb of mother Church if they had not been signed with some sacrament of faith?"[159] Whatever the exact contours of the rite of entrance, candidates could henceforth count themselves as "Christians"; they now belonged to "the great household."[160] They were now catechumens.

THE MESSAGE AND THE MESSENGER

I have given Augustine's *On Catechizing* close scrutiny. It is important, however, not to lose sight of his wider evangelical efforts. He used to correspond with pagan intellectuals such as Longinianus, a Platonist philosopher, and Volusianus, a prominent aristocrat.[161] He knew that Volusianus would circulate his responses among elite circles and so treated these exchanges as open letters rather than private correspondence. He also took great care how he handled Volusianus's philosophically subtle and politically volatile objections: that Jesus had simply been a magician; that the God of the Christians, in abrogating the Mosaic law, showed a fickle nature; that the Lord of the universe could not possibly have "hidden within the tiny body of a wailing infant"; that the Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek threatened the very welfare of the empire.[162]

[158] *s.* 32.13, 97A.3, 301A.8; *Io. eu. tr.* 3.2.

[159] *s.* 352.3 (= *s. Dolbeau* 14) (*Vingt-six*, 109); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:88. On these newly discovered Dolbeau sermons see below. This same "conception" image appears in *s.* 56.5, 260C.1 (= *s. Mai* 94); cf. *s.* 65A.7 (= *s. Étaix* 1)

[160] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112). Cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 44.2; *s.* 46.31, 97A.4, 301A.8 (= *s. Denis* 17).

[161] For the letters with Longinianus see *ep.* 233–35; for Volusianus see *ep.* 132, 135–39.

[162] Volusianus, preserved as *ep.* 135.2 (CCL 31B:251); trans. Teske, WSA II/2:209.

Deogratias, whose queries had prompted *On Catechizing*, enlisted Augustine again a few years later, forwarding questions from a prominent but unnamed pagan. The questions were an odd medley: why a resurrected body; why the Incarnation happened so late in world history; whether pagan sacrifices had any efficacy; how Jonah could spend days in a whale's belly. Augustine replied with a mini-treatise, *Six Questions Explained in Answer to the Pagans*, telling Deogratias that his friendship with the unnamed pagan had motivated him: "You know very well how much I love him and what a sorrow it is for me that he is not yet a Christian."[163] Augustine acknowledged that asking hard, probing questions was certainly legitimate: "clearly, once we already hold onto the faith, we should investigate these questions with great eagerness in order that the minds of the faithful experience pious delight." But he worried that the man was making up questions as a way to avoid the deeper, burning question of faith itself. "He is not thinking enough," Augustine complained, "about either the human condition or his own present age . . . [not realizing] we may come to the end of life without faith."[164]

Besides such letter-writing, Augustine often trained various congregations he spoke to for the evangelical task of winning over pagan neighbors. In 1990, François Dolbeau discovered twenty-six new sermons by Augustine.[165] This was a landmark discovery, one that is still reshaping Augustinian studies. One of these newly discovered sermons, *Sermon* 198, what Dolbeau has called "the jewel" of the collection, is a massive three-hour sermon Augustine directed against pagans.[166] It was delivered, on January 1, the pagan

[163] *ep.* 102.1 (CCL 31B:8); trans. Teske, WSA II/2:21.

[164] *ep.* 102.38 (CCL 31B:33); trans. Teske, WSA II/2:39.

[165] François Dolbeau, ed., *Augustin d'Hippone: Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*, 2d rev. ed. (Paris: Institut d'Études augustiniennes, 2009); the first edition appeared in 1996. For an overview of this major discovery see Henry Chadwick, "The New Sermons of St. Augustine," *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1996): 69–91; Brown, "New Evidence," *Augustine of Hippo*, 2d ed., 441–62. For more focused studies see Madec, ed., *Augustin Prédicateur*.

[166] Dolbeau, *Vingt-Six*, 345, where he speaks of *s.* 198 (= *s. Dolbeau* 26) as "le joyau de recueil." This sermon receives close analysis in Madec, ed., *Augustin*

feast of Kalends (probably in 404). As local New Year's revelers were noisily celebrating outside the basilica, Augustine spelled out at length and in detail why he thought paganism and its sacrificial tradition wrongheaded and ultimately demonic, and how Christianity answered humanity's deepest yearnings for salvation in and through Christ, the one true mediator. Augustine reminded his hearers that many of them had been converts, that "you too, once upon a time, were perhaps caught up in this sort of insanity," and that they met pagans not only in the streets but "in your own homes." He asked them to extend their love to pagans they knew: "After all, if the result could be produced in you that you no longer love today what you used to love yesterday, it can be produced in them."[167] Such extravagant sermons were local efforts, delivered orally. Augustine also devoted great effort to a written one, spending some fourteen years, from 412 to 426, composing his massive apologia, *City of God*, arguing against the most formidable pagan theorists of his day and setting out an extraordinarily influential account of the Christian vision of world history.[168]

Much more difficult to document are the day-to-day evangelical efforts carried on by ordinary Christians. In quiet ways they worked to pass on the Christian message to pagan friends, family, and neighbors. As Augustine noted in one sermon, just as

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Prédicateur; see especially in that volume John Scheid, "Les réjouissances de calendes de janvier d'après le *sermon* Dolbeau 26," 353–65; Claude Lepelley, "L'aristocratie lettrée païenne: une menace aux yeux d'Augustin," 327–42, and Robert Dodaro, "*Christus sacerdos*: Augustine's Preaching against Pagan Priests in the Light of *S.* Dolbeau 26 and 23," 377–93.

[167] *s.* 198.7, 8 (= *s. Dolbeau* 26) (*Vingt-six*, 372); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:186.

[168] Essentials on *ciu. dei* include James Wetzel, ed., *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*; Mikka Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine's* De Civitate Dei, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 53 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Gerard O'Daly, *Augustine's City of God: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); Mark Vessey, Karla Pollmann, and Allan Fitzgerald, eds., *History, Apocalypse, and the Secular Imagination: New Essays on Augustine's City of God* (Bowling Green, OH: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999); Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the Samaritan woman had proclaimed Christ to those in her village, "that is how it happens today with those who are outside and are not yet Christians; they are told about Christ by Christian friends."[169] Encounters of this kind, so critical to the spread of Christianity among the mass of ordinary people, are the sort rarely preserved in the historical record. In ways for which we have scant record they said things or did things or modeled things that inspired inquirers and spurred them to take the decisive step of knocking on a Deogratias's or an Augustine's door.

Within this wider sweep the evangelization described *On Catechizing* held a limited, but critical, place. This catechesis was an overture: both a prelude and an overview. Its contours, in Augustine's hands, both relied on and modified the outline used in classical orations. The introduction (*exordium*) took its point of departure from the motives that had first sparked the inquirer's interest in Christianity, whether these had come from books, oracles, or dreams. In the body of the address the catechist "unrolled the scroll" of salvation history. This involved not so much storytelling as making the case for Christianity. The Christian narrative drew on salvation history for both the facts of the case (as in a legal *narratio*) and the evidence (as in a legal *confirmatio*). In this recital the catechist not only tried to convince inquirers' minds but also to evoke delight and amazement, whether by prophecies fulfilled or by unveiling hidden allegories. Two underlying and interrelated principles governed this recital. First, the catechist was to show the unity of the Testaments and the priority of the Christian dispensation. Second, the jewel-like episodes taken from the Scriptures were to be set within the golden message of love, the love of God and of neighbor. At its close, narrative shifted to exhortation, from a scriptural past to an eschatological future. The Christian exhortation as Augustine described it drew on traditional rhetorical turns. It had a *reprehensio*: the pagan case against the resurrection of the flesh was to be dismantled. It had an *enumeratio*: earlier threads (true rest, the two cities, the six ages) were drawn together by set-

[169] *Io. eu. tr.* 15.33 (CCL 36:164); trans. Edmund Hill, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, WSA III/12:296.

ting them within the framework of the Last Judgment. It had an *indignatio*: the catechist was to arm inquirers against both Christianity's detractors and the church's "chaff." Finally, it had a *conquestio*: the catechist encouraged inquirers to imitate the good within the church and to see God's grace within it all.

For Augustine, evangelical catechesis was an oral art. It demanded an improvisational touch, attuned to the mood of the moment and to the experience and education of the inquirer. It demanded respecting the face-to-face dynamic. By the very nature of oral teaching, no clear line could be drawn between the Christian message and the Christian who bore that message. Inevitably, the bearing of the messenger affected the bearing of the message. Thus Augustine insisted that what Deogratias needed was not method, but good cheer. A glum Deogratias would have proved a poor spokesman for the awe-inspiring love of God. Evangelical catechesis involved more than methods or message; ultimately it was about forming relationships. Augustine expected that a sympathy would spring up between catechist and inquirer so that clear lines between the two would blur. He thought it only natural to compare the experience of evangelization to the experience of one friend giving another a tour through the countryside.

In the end, Augustine believed that the heart of the matter lay in the human heart. This meant keeping an eye on what excited inquirers and playing to that interest. It also meant that one must respect their less-than-pure motives, that one presume the best, even in suspicious conversions, and that one hope for God's grace to make up for what seemed lacking. Augustine stressed the affective because he believed that no voice reached the ears save the stirrings of the heart. And as he saw it, Scripture's core was a message aimed at the heart: the love of God and of neighbor, for God, in Christ, had shown how much he loved us and, in Christ, had made himself our neighbor. This message shaped the pedagogy: inquirers needed a *first* taste of this love of God and of neighbor. Yet they needed *only* a first taste. The catechumenate offered ample time for purifying motives, for learning the range and depth of the Christian message, and for working out a way of life appropriate to those who bore on their forehead the cross of Christ.

Chart 3

Augustine's Opening Catechesis and the Classical Juridical Oration

Cicero's Outline for Oration	Function	Augustine's Outline for First Catechesis
1. *Exordium*	Opening: render audience well disposed, attentive and receptive	1. *Exordium:* play on motives raised in inquiry; touch on books read by educated inquirer
2. *Narratio*	Facts of the Case	2. *Narratio*: recite cardinal points of salvation history from Genesis to present church; love as thread
3. *Partitio*	Where agree with opponents and where disagree	[No equivalent given]
4. *Confirmatio*	Arguments that support one's own case	*Narratio:* Cite fulfilled prophecies
5. *Reprehensio*	Arguments that weaken the opponent's case	In *exhortatio*, respond to objections against resurrection of the flesh
6. *Peroratio*	Conclusion:	3. *Exhortatio*:
a. *Enumeratio*	Sum up one's case	Case summarized within perspective of last judgment
b. *Indignatio*	Arouse ill will against opponents	Arm inquirer against pagans, heretics, Jews; and against "chaff" within the church
c. *Conquestio*	Arouse pity and sympathy for one's client	Encourage inquirer and exhort to imitate the good within the church

CHAPTER 4

Catechumenate: Breaking Open the Bread of the Word

In his treatise *On Faith and Works* (*De fide et operibus*) Augustine touched briefly on the catechumenate phase, its tasks and goal: "What is all that time for when they hold the status and title of catechumen, if it is not for them *to hear* what a Christian should believe and what kind of life a Christian should lead so that when they have proved themselves, they may then eat from the Lord's table and drink from his cup? . . . This has been the practice for as long as the Church has had the sound rule that those coming to receive Christ's name are given the status of catechumen."[1] The key word here is the verb "to hear." "Catechumen," as Augustine used to remind his congregation, meant "hearer."[2] That "title" defined their task. The hearing expected of catechumens required far more than listening to the gospel reading or to sermons on it. It meant soaking the Gospel in, letting it echo into the very depths of their hearts and minds, letting it utterly transform their world-view and lifestyle. Augustine goes on in this treatise to explain that in sermons he always presented a "cross-weave" of doctrine and moral teaching, that these interweavings took place "in the context of a single discourse, whether it be to the catechumens or to the faithful," as an "instruction" to the first and as a "reminder" to the latter.[3] Augustine gave no further specifics here. He presumed

[1] *f. et op.* 6.9 (CSEL 41:45); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:233.

[2] *s.* 132.1 (PL 38:734). On Augustine's use of the term see Émilien Lamirande, "Catechumenus," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 788–94; also idem, "La signification de '*christianus*' dans la théologie de saint Augustin et la tradition ancienne," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 9 (1963): 221–34.

[3] *f. et op.* 7.11 (CSEL 41:48); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:234.

readers would know what they were. These passing comments—at once tantalizing and vague—do at least provide a vocabulary for our questions: What did the "status" of catechumen entail? What did catechumens actually hear? What were they taught to believe? Where and when did they hear it? What kind of life were they expected to lead? And how did the local assembly determine that catechumens had "proved themselves"?

To answer these questions is not easy. Why? Because the catechumenate period lacks, from our vantage point, the easy visibility of the other periods. Catechumens were not generally the center of attention. Nor, it seems, did they receive special instructions, at least the sort that *competentes* and neophytes received. Instead, catechumens simply blended in with the baptized, with penitents, with any who attended the liturgies of the word. There, all would have pondered the same Scriptures, all would have sung the same psalms, all would have heard the same sermons. This meant that what catechumens *heard* did not differ from what other groups in the assembly *heard*. Some older commentators claimed that this style of catechumenate meant *no* catechumenate.[4] Frederic Van der Meer, in his classic *Augustine the Bishop*, voiced a similar view: catechumens "were dependent on what they could learn from ordinary sermons. . . . No doubt they listened, but they did not understand; they were *audientes* ['hearers'] not *intelligentes* ['understanders']."[5]

[4] Josef A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy, to the Time of Gregory the Great*, trans. Francis A. Brunner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), 249, claims: "The entire preparation for Baptism was therefore condensed into two sessions: the opening catechesis and the catechesis in Lent." Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries* (New York: Sadlier, 1979), 94-97, claims: "The catechumenate, properly speaking, no longer existed. . . . The Church seemed to be more preoccupied with 'pushing' spiritless candidates to baptism." As noted in chap. 3 n. 8, both rely on arguments from silence and ignore the fragmentary character of the historical record; neither shows awareness of the wide range of evidence found in this and the next chapter.

[5] Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward,

These low estimates rely, it seems, on two unspoken assumptions: first, only talks directed *exclusively* to catechumens would be truly instructive; second, ordinary sermons would be either too short, too infrequent, or too insubstantial to meet their needs. Such assumptions may or may not be true. Much depends on the form, length, frequency, content, and style a preacher brings to the medium. Earlier we saw how profoundly Ambrose's ordinary sermons affected Augustine: they dismantled his deep-seated biases against Scripture; they provoked him to question his social-climbing ways; they dazzled him with a new vision of God, a God who truly took flesh and dwelt among us, a God who unfurled over the centuries an epic plan to rescue lost humanity. In this chapter and the next we will see that Augustine's sermons could be equally potent. They were frequent, lengthy, substantive, moving, and memorable. What is more, he geared them precisely to those least likely to understand, whether poorly instructed faithful or simple catechumens. So to understand Augustine as a teacher of catechumens we need to understand Augustine the preacher.[6]

1961), 356–57. One wonders why van der Meer asserts this, since it contradicts his own portrait of Augustine's brilliance as a preacher (see pp. 388–452). The *audientes / intelligentes* dichotomy is drawn from *s.* 132 and applies solely to catechumens' ignorance of the "secret" sacraments. On this issue and this sermon see below.

[6] On Augustine the preacher see Maurice Pontet, *L'exégèse de s. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1946); Christine Mohrmann, "Augustine and the *Eloquentia*" and "Saint Augustin prédicateur," reprinted in *Études sur le latin des Chrétiens*, vol. 1, 2d ed. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961), 351–70, 391–402; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 240–55; Goulven Madec, "Augustin évêque," 11–32, and François Dolbeau, "'Seminator uerborum': Réflexions d'un éditeur de sermons d'Augustin," 95–111 in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur (395–411): Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5–7 Sept, 1996)*, CEASA 159 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1998); Marie-François Berrouard, *Introduction aux Homélies de saint Augustin sur l'Évangile de saint Jean*, CEASA 170 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2004), 9–19; Michael McCarthy, "'We Are Your Books': Augustine, the Bible and the Practice of Authority," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75 (2007): 342–52.

I noted that from our vantage point the catechumenate lacks easy visibility because catechumens simply blended in with the larger worshiping assembly. In the main that is true. But every so often they become visible, that is, whenever Augustine in the middle of an ordinary sermon turned and spoke to them directly. In the sermons that have come down to us (only a small fraction of those he gave), he makes at least twenty-nine of these turns. (For a list of these, see chart 4; for other mentions, see chart 5). These turns take one of four forms: (i) Augustine begs catechumens to live in a manner that respects the cross they bear on their foreheads; (ii) he reminds them of their ignorance of the "secrets" (the rites of baptism and Eucharist); (iii) he singles out their behavior to illustrate a point; and (iv) he exhorts them to complete their initiation. These turns, while of considerable interest, are usually brief. If we were to study only these isolated moments we would certainly see some ways Augustine taught catechumens, but we would also ignore much of what they actually *heard*. After all, they were present not just for those brief moments but for the *whole* sermon, and it was the *whole* sermon that served as their instruction.

Even if we were to examine these twenty-nine sermons, not just the momentary turns but the whole sermon, we would still get a fragmented picture. It would not give us any sense of what a cohort of catechumens might have heard over time. For that, one needs a sequence of sermons. Only in that way can one get any sense of Augustine's curriculum. It so happens that scholars have isolated one such sequence: an intertwining series from his *Expositions on the Psalms* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 119–33 and 95) and his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (*In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* 1–12). (See charts 6–8).[7] This series was given between December

[7] Maurice LeLandais, "Deux années de prédication de saint Augustin: Introduction a la lecture de l'*In Joannem*," in Henri Rondet, ed., *Études augustiniennes* (Paris: Aubier, 1953), 1–95. There are sermons that are also probably part of the same sequence: *ep. Io. tr.* 1-6, possibly also 7-8 (given during Easter week), and certainly *Io. eu. tr.* 13-16 (sometime after Easter week). The Maurists, in their edition, had noted interconnections between these two sets of sermons; LeLandais was able to piece together the full sequence. I have

and the opening of Lent of a single liturgical year (probably 406–407).[8] What makes this sequence especially intriguing is that within it are six explicit (and several other implied) turns to the catechumens, and the climax of the whole sequence, *Tractate* 11, is devoted entirely to the catechumens. There, Augustine begs them to turn in their names for the Lenten training.[9] This sequence thus offers a glimpse into Augustine's approach to a curriculum for catechumens—at least what he did with one cohort of them over the course of one-third of one liturgical year.

So to examine Augustine as a teacher of catechumens we will first look at Augustine the preacher. This chapter takes a more wide-angle view. Here the emphasis will be on three matters: the *where* of his catechesis (physical setting, liturgical context, audience); the *how* (rhetorical techniques, affective tenor, vocabulary); and the *why* (rhetorical aims and principles, view of Scripture). I will treat these matters in some detail because they are relevant not only for this chapter but for the next three as well. The next chapter will take a more close-up view, focusing on this intertwining sequence of sermons on John and the Psalms. There, we will look at the *what* (specific topics) and the *how* (specific teaching methods). From these two chapters we will see how Augustine's ordinary sermons served as quite potent instructions for catechumens and how his direct turns to the catechumens formed only one pedagogical thread within a much broader and richer catechetical enterprise.

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translated and reproduced his summary chart as chart 8. While scholars have agreed with LeLandais that these sermons form a single series, his dating has been challenged. See next note.

[8] On the dating see Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1965); Marie-François Berrouard, "La date des Tractatus I-LIV *In Iohannis evangelium* de saint Augustin," *Recherches augustiniennes* 7 (1971): 105–68. La Bonnardière's dating of the *Tractates* beyond the first 16 has been challenged.

[9] Suzanne Poque, "Trois semaines de prédication à Hippone en février-mars 407," *Recherches augustiniennes* 7 (1971): 169–87, demonstrates that *Io. eu. tr.* 11 was near the beginning of Lent (not just before Easter, as was previously thought).

FEEDING THE HUNGRY: THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The earliest known portrait of Augustine is a fresco dating from about the year 600.[10] It captures him in the classic pose of the ancient preacher: seated on an episcopal *cathedra*, his hands clasping a codex of the Scriptures. The image, while artistically crude, is at least apt, for it portrays Augustine as he wanted himself remembered: as a servant of the Word. His task, he believed, involved much more than simply explaining the Bible. It required that he do with God's word what Christ had done with bread—break it open, multiply it, feed the hungry: "When I set out the holy Scriptures for you, it's as though I were breaking open bread for you. You the hungry, come, get it. . . . What I spend on you is not mine. What you eat, I eat. What you live on, I live on. We have in heaven a common storehouse, for from it comes the word of God."[11] This idea of Scripture as food appears again and again. Another time, on the anniversary of his ordination, he remarked: "From what I feast on, from that I feed you. I am a table-servant, not the master of the house. From what I set before you, from that I too draw my life."[12] For Augustine this complex of images and associations—Scripture as "bread," the teacher as "table-servant," preaching as "feeding the hungry"—was more than clever metaphor. For him and for his hearers the words he served up *were* life, for they broke open a truth beyond words: the divine life itself.

[10] On this fresco see Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), xv, who suggests (ever so subtly) that it might be based on an authentic portrait of the historical Augustine. A color version of it is on Lancel's cover, as well as on the cover of Mark Vessey, ed., *A Companion to Augustine*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). For a study see Josef Wilpert, "The Oldest Portrait of St. Augustine," 3–8 in *Augustine: Second Founder of the Faith*, Collectanea Augustiniana, ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

[11] *s.* 95.1-2 (PL 38:581); author's translation, *AOW*, 133. This is a favorite theme: *s.* 229E.4 (= *s. Guelf.* 9); *Io. eu. tr.* 34.1; *doctr. chr.* 1.1.1.

[12] *s.* 339.3 (PL 39:1481); author's translation. See also *s.* 101.4, 260D.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 18), 179A.8 (= *s. Wilm.* 2).

Augustine handed out this "bread" at public liturgies.[13] In Hippo both Eucharist and Vespers were held daily, or almost daily.[14] Augustine may not always have preached at both, but he did so sometimes. Outside of Easter he preached at least four times a week; during Lent, daily; during Easter week, twice a day.[15] We know that large crowds attended not only every Sunday but at many other times as well: on feast days and their vigils, on fast days, on the numerous and popular "birthdays" (*natalitia*) of martyrs.

On these occasions crowds would stream into Augustine's church, the Basilica of Peace (*Basilica Pacis*).[16] It was an imposing edifice, some forty-two meters long, one of the larger churches

[13] On the liturgy in the North African church see Robin M. Jensen and J. Patout Burns, "The Eucharistic Liturgy in Hippo's Basilica Major at the Time of Augustine," *ATA*, 335–38; Martin Klöckener, "Euangelium: . . . proclamation liturgique," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 1147–50; Michael Margoni-Kögler, "Lectio," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2010): 914–22.

[14] On daily Eucharist see *ep.* 54.2; *s.* 58.12; on daily Vespers, *ep.* 29.11. Cf. *s.* 308A.7 (= *s. Denis* 11), preached in Carthage. In some cases Augustine preached twice within the same service; *s.* 266 was given during the same vigil of Pentecost as *s.* 29B (= *s. Dolbeau* 8). On this see François Dolbeau, "Annexe: 'Conversi ad dominum . . .'" 172–73 in *Augustin d'Hippone: Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique, Retrouvé à Mayence*, ed. idem, CEASA 147 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1996).

[15] On the liturgies of Lent and Easter, see Suzanne Poque, *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermons pour la Pâque*, SC 116 (2003), 55–115. We will examine these in detail in later chapters.

[16] Erwan Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone: Ville épiscopale de saint Augustin* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1958). Marec spent two decades excavating archaeological sites in and around Hippo Regius; scholars now accept his identification of the ruins of Augustine's main church. See Henri-Iréné Marrou, "La basilique chrétienne d'Hippone," *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 6 (1960): 109–54; Jean-Pierre Caillet, "Basilius," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 608–14; George Radan, "The Basilica Pacis of Hippo," 147–88 in *Augustine in Iconography: History and Legend*, ed. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). See especially Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 235–44. Lancel, who is particularly attuned to issues of archaeology, analyzes the evidence with considerable prudence and concludes that Marec's identification is correct.

uncovered in Roman North Africa.[17] It lay on the outskirts of the town, away from the forum with its bustling marketplace and old pagan temples. When people entered the basilica they would find the glare of the North African sun replaced by a softer light: the flicker of gold flames in small oil lamps. (This lamplight impressed Augustine; he thought of it as a symbol of Christ's light shining forth in the darkness of the world.)[18] The basilica's interior, divided into three naves, was open, spacious. Its floors were inlaid with colorful mosaics; particularly noteworthy was the "craftsmanship of its walls and roofs," especially "the shining marble and gilded ceilings."[19] There were no pews, so people stood, women on one side, men on the other.[20] "The great numbers," Augustine once noted, "crowd right up to the walls; they annoy each other by the pressure and almost choke each other by their overflowing numbers."[21] These crowds included people from all levels of provincial society—artisans and fishermen, merchants and shipping magnates, government magistrates and military officers—but the majority were poor townspeople.[22] Among this assembly were, of course, the baptized. From all indications, the number of catechumens was probably sizeable.[23] Even pagans, Jews, or Manichees

[17] Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 241, notes that the ruins of the basilica, if one excludes the apse, are 37 meters long and 18.5 meters wide, matching quite precisely Augustine's comment in *ep. Io. tr.* 4.9 that his church has a two-to-one ratio in length to width. Lancel adds that this size "belongs to the category of large basilica, without in any way being able to rival the vaster churches in this region of the Christian world."

[18] *s.* 221.1 (SC 116:210–12).

[19] *s.* 15.1 (CCL 41:193); trans. Hill, WSA III/1:323.

[20] *ciu. dei* 2.28 (CCL 47:63). In the recently discovered *s.* 359B.5 (= *s. Dolbeau* 2; *Vingt-six*, 330–31), Augustine says that separating the congregation by sexes was relatively recent and recounts how in his student days in Carthage young men (including his college-age self) used these sexually mixed gatherings to harass women. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 456–57; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, 26–27.

[21] *en. Ps.* 39.10 (CCL 38:433); author's translation.

[22] See Berrouard, "L'auditoire," *Introduction aux homélies*, 103–13.

[23] *s.* 352A.3 (= *Dolbeau* 14; *Vingt-six*, 108): "There are many (*multi*) listening to me who have not yet taken their place among the faithful by baptism and are still catechumens."

might mingle among the crowd, for this celebration—according to conciliar decree—was open to all comers.[24]

The liturgy began with a solemn procession. Augustine would follow an entourage of subdeacons, deacons, and presbyters up to the raised apse at the far end of the church. The apse itself was semicircular. Around its walls was a set of stone benches where the presbyters would sit. At the center of these, set against the back wall and elevated a few steps, was the episcopal *cathedra* (both a "professor's chair" and a "judgment seat").[25] From this "high place" Augustine presided over things, "overseeing" the assembly's "comings-in and goings-out."[26] Once Augustine reached the top step in front of the *cathedra* he would have turned to the assembly and proclaimed the traditional greeting: "The Lord be with you." "And with your spirit," the assembly would shout back. "We say this," Augustine once noted, "when we greet you from the apse, and as often as we pray; because that is what we need, that the Lord should be with us, because without him we are nothing."[27]

After the greeting, the reader—typically a young boy—would read "from an elevated place in the sight of all" and proclaim an excerpt either from the Old Testament or from one of the New Testament letters.[28] On the feasts of martyrs another reading would be

[24] Council of Carthage IV, *Canon* 84 (CCL 149:351).

[25] Augustine refers to the *cathedra* as a "high spot" (*locus superior*): *cat. rud.* 15.23; *s.* 339.8, 151.4; *en. Ps.* 126.3; *ep.* 29.8; *ciu. dei* 2.28. In *ciu. dei* 22.8 he mentions steps leading up to it. See Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone*, 27–29. The spot where the *cathedra* used to be is now empty, the stone probably pilfered because it was marble.

[26] *en. Ps.* 126.3 (CCL 40:1858/CSEL 95.3:189); author's translation, *AOW*, 87–88. He plays here on the root meaning of the Greek word for "bishop" (*episkopos*), that is, "overseer."

[27] *s.* 229A.3 (= *Guelf.* 7); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:270. "Peace be with you" was also used: *en. Ps.* 124.10.

[28] *ciu. dei* 2.28 (CCL 46:63); trans. Babcock, WSA I/6:68. See Elisabeth Paoli-Lafaye, "Les 'lecteurs' des textes liturgiques," 59–74 in *Saint Augustin et la Bible*, ed. Anne-Marie La Bonnardière (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986); Michael Margoni-Kögler, "Lector," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2010): 922–23.

added: from the martyrs' *acta*, the record of their trial and death.[29] Reading was a much harder task in those days. Ancient codices lacked punctuation and ran words together, making it crucial that the reader know how to break apart the words (*distinguere*) and to mark out the phrases with proper inflection (*pronuntiare*). As Henri Marrou once noted, "For ancients, just to read a text was to begin interpreting."[30] After the reading Augustine would send word to the cantor which psalm he wanted sung. Then as now, liturgical planning could backfire. On one occasion the cantor sang the wrong psalm. Undaunted, Augustine preached on the psalm that was sung rather than the one he had prepared: "We have deemed it preferable to see in the reader's mistake a sign of the will of God and to follow that rather than to do our own will by sticking to our original plan."[31] Normally, the psalm was sung using a responsorial style. The cantor intoned the verses while the assembly joined in the refrain. After this a deacon read the gospel.[32] When finished, he would come over to Augustine and hand him the codex so that he might refer to it while preaching.[33]

NOISY IMPROVISATIONS: THE SERMON AND ITS HEARERS

After this sequence of readings (and song), Augustine used to preach. From all accounts he was a dazzling public speaker. Even opponents acknowledged as much. A Manichee named Secundinus once quipped that in Augustine "I never found a Christian,"

[29] Augustine cites *acta* that had been read before certain sermons: *s.* 273.1 (feast of Bishop Fructuosus); *s.* 275.1 (Vincent); *s.* 280.1 (Perpetua and Felicity); *s.* 299D.7 (= *S. Denis* 16) (Scillitan martyrs). Council of Carthage III (397 CE), *Canon* 47 (CCL 149:340), notes approval of the practice.

[30] Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 21. See *doctr. chr.* 3.2ff.

[31] *en. Ps.* 138.1 (CSEL 95.4:126); trans. Boulding, WSA III/20:256. A second instance is described in *s.* 352.1 (PL 39:1549–50).

[32] *s.* 139A.1 (= *S. Mai* 125) (MA 1:353).

[33] *s.* 356 (PL 39:1574): The *notarius* who recorded this sermon notes: "When the deacon Lazarus had chanted the passage, he handed the volume to the bishop" (trans. Hill, WSA III/10:173). In *Io. eu. tr.* 40.1, Augustine says he is preaching with the gospel book in hand; in *Io. eu. tr.* 35.9, he says that he will now lay aside the codex he has in his hand.

but "everywhere a consummate orator and a god of almost all eloquence."[34] When the crowds came to hear Augustine they came not just for instruction but also for entertainment—to be dazzled by the flow and music of his words. Certainly he who so often railed against pagan theaters was quite conscious that Christianity had its own theatrics: the liturgy itself, the Bible's epic drama of salvation, even his own verbal wizardry. As he once put it: "For you must not think, brothers and sisters, that the Lord our God has left us without public extravaganzas; if there are no extravaganzas, then why did you gather here today?"[35]

(1) WRITTEN TEXT AND ORAL PERFORMANCE

When we today encounter Augustine we meet him only through the sermon texts that have come down to us. Interestingly, he worked neither from notes nor from a text first written out, then memorized. He prepared only by prayer and study.[36] The texts we have record his on-the-spot improvisations.[37] His words were preserved thanks to scribes known as *notarii*. These *notarii*, like contemporary court stenographers, were masters of a special shorthand that enabled them to record a speaker's every word.

[34] Secundinus, *Ad sanctum Augustinum epistula* 3 (CSEL 25.2:895); trans. Roland Teske, *The Manichaean Debate*, WSA I/19 (2006), 358.

[35] *Io. eu. tr.* 7.6 (CCL 36:70); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:149 (modified). This theme appears regularly: *s.* 51.1-2, 301A.7 (= *s. Denis* 17), 313A.3 (= *s. Denis* 14); *en. Ps.* 39.9, 80.22. See Enrique A. Eguiarte, "Los espectáculos del anfiteatro en san Agustín y sus implicaciones espirituales," *Augustinus* 224–25 (2012): 75–98.

[36] See *doctr. chr.* 4.10.25 (CCL 32:133–34), in which Augustine argues against writing out and memorizing; and *doctr. chr.* 4.15.32 (CCL 32:138–39), in which he urges preparing by prayer.

[37] On the extemporaneous character of Augustine's sermons see William Harmless, "A Love Supreme: Augustine's 'Jazz' of Theology," *Augustinian Studies* 43 (2012): 149–77. Their improvisational character has been recognized by Augustinian scholars for over a century, ever since the studies of Roy J. Deferrari, "Reports of Augustine's Unwritten Sermons," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 46 (1915): 35–45; idem, "St. Augustine's Method of Composing and Delivering Sermons," *The American Journal of Philology* 43 (1922): 97–123, 193–219.

Augustine occasionally alluded to them: "The stenographers of the church, as you see, are taking down what we are saying, they are taking down what you say, and [in that way] my words and your shouts of approval do not fall to the ground."[38] Sometime later, other scribes known as *librarii* used to transcribe these stenographic notes to create the texts we now have. Churches in the ancient world routinely employed such people, the same way that businesses, large households, and government offices did. Augustine's own *notarii* were not the only ones scribbling down his sermons. According to Augustine's biographer, Possidius of Calama, members of the congregation would bring along their own "*notarii* to take down what was said."[39] Their speed and accuracy were proverbial. That reputation is borne out by *Sermon* 37: It has come down to us via two completely independent transcripts, yet the two texts are identical.[40]

In working with such texts we must constantly bear in mind that they contain only a faint residue of Augustine's living speech. As van der Meer has noted: "What is true of all good speakers is certainly true of Augustine, namely, that the bare text which has been reconstructed from the notes of stenographers does not even give an approximate idea of the reality. That stream of words that ceaselessly rushes on, sparkling and shimmering as it goes, has been reduced to a shadow of its true self."[41] What has been lost, stripped

[38] This sermon is preserved as *ep.* 213.2 (CSEL 47:375); trans. Teske, WSA II/4:33. Augustine refers to their special shorthand in *doctr. chr.* 2.26.40. On *notarii* see Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literary, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Wolfgang Hübner, "Nota, notarius," *Aug-Lex* 4 (2012): 216–18.

[39] Possidius of Calama, *Vita* 7 (Geerlings, 38); author's translation.

[40] Cyrille Lambot, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Sermones de Vetere Testamento*, CCL 41 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1959), 444, notes that for *s.* 37 there are "deux exemplaires absolument indépendants l'un de l'autre. . . . [L]e text est identique, ce qui donne une idée très avantageuse de l'exactitude que les 'notarii' ou tachygraphes apportaient à leur tâche." On occasion it could prove difficult for the *notarii* to keep pace; in *ep.* 44 Augustine describes their struggles at notetaking during a spirited debate.

[41] Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 412. See also Berrouard, *Introduction*, 9–10.

away, is the very thing that gave his living speech its dynamism, its power: the cadence of delivery, the accents and pauses, gestures and facial expressions. We need only compare a transcript of Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" with the film to appreciate how striking the gap is between text and oral performance. Certainly Possidius sensed the difference: "Those who read what he has written in his works on theological matters profit greatly, but I believe that the ones who really profited were those who actually heard him and saw him speak in church."[42]

Sermons generally lasted around an hour, but some went much longer.[43] That may seem long by our standards, particularly given that Augustine's audience was standing. Yet his hearers expected nothing less. As van der Meer has noted, prolixity, not brevity, was the fashion of the day: "*Copia*, or amplitude, was in those days considered an essential mark of genius. . . . Brevity was accounted as the sign of a poor and ill-furnished mind and was looked upon as a mark of weakness. A single idea must be made to sparkle in a hundred forms."[44] Often Augustine could be so swept up by the flow of his words that the hour would pass without his completing even a fraction of what he had intended to say: "I lost track of how long I have been talking. From the smell of the sweat, I guess I have given quite a long talk. But because of your enthusiasm, it has not been enough. You are too excitable. O, that with this fervor you would seize the kingdom of heaven."[45] Van der Meer points out an overlooked correlative to this fashionable long-windedness: "This age of interminable speeches seems to have been blessed with a gift of interminable listening."[46] Despite this, Augustine was

[42] Possidius of Calama, *Vita* 31 (Geerlings, 104); author's translation, *AOW*, 439–40.

[43] His improvised sermon *en. Ps.* 138 (noted above) would have taken, by my rough timing, over eighty minutes to deliver. The recently discovered *s.* 198 (= *s. Dolbeau* 26) would have lasted three hours.

[44] Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 419. The tradition of beautiful long-windedness dates back at least to Cicero and Quintilian; see Marrou, *Saint Augustine et la fin de la culture antique*, 70, 75–76.

[45] *en. Ps.* 72.34 (CCL 39:1004); author's translation.

[46] Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 176.

always alert to signs of his hearers' ebbing attention and would break off abruptly if he sensed they were fatigued.[47]

He typically remained seated when preaching.[48] Sitting in such a visually prominent spot—and the honor it implied—left him uneasy: "Now just because I speak to you from this elevated place, that does not mean that I am your teacher. That One—Christ—is the teacher of us all, the One whose professorial chair sits above all the heavens. Under that One we come together, convening as a single school. And you and I—we are fellow students. But I'm here to advise you, just the way older students tend to do."[49] Despite his complaints about sitting in "this elevated place," the arrangement was still quite intimate. People could press up quite close so that the front row might stand only a few yards away.

Not only did Augustine preach in close physical proximity to his audience; he also stayed close to them emotionally. He had a sharp eye for the subtle hues of the human heart and brought this fine-tuned sense to his preaching. It allowed him to read the emotions of his hearers—and to let them read his. On some occasions Augustine could get quite worked up. He might weep or utter loud groans.[50] As he saw it, some feelings were simply too deep for words. Most of the time, however, he had an uncanny ability to find words for his feelings, and with these words he shared his great yearnings, his sense of delight and wonder, his anguish and fears. Augustine focused intently on the heart—both his own and his hearers'—because he believed the heart to be the privileged locus of faith, that "the ears of God were in the praying heart."[51]

[47] *Io. eu. tr.* 8.13 (CCL 30:90); cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 4.16, 19.20. At the end of a long sermon on Ps 88 (*en. Ps.* 88.1.29) he tells his audience that they will be unable to listen to all he has to say, and so he sends them off to have their midday meal; *en. Ps.* 88.2.1 then picks up in the afternoon where he had left off.

[48] *s.* 17.2, 95.2, 355.2. Sometimes Augustine did stand: *Io. eu. tr.* 19.17; *s.* 94A.5 (= *s. Caillau* 2,6).

[49] *s.* 301A.2 (= *s. Denis* 17) (MA 1:81-82); author's translation, *AOW*, 162. See also *en. ps.* 126.3, *s.* 340A.4 (= *s. Guelf.* 32).

[50] *ep.* 29.5, 7 (CCL 31:100, 102).

[51] *en. Ps.* 129.1 (CSEL 95.3:248–49); author's translation. We saw the same idea earlier in *cat. rud.* 9.13.

(2) AUDIENCE RESPONSE

Augustine's audience responded to his appeals with gusto—with thunderous applause, shouts, cries. In his day, churchgoing was a raucous, noisy affair. The assembly applauded whenever they recognized a favorite Scripture verse.[52] They would even interrupt and shout out the remainder of a verse he had begun to quote.[53] They loved to show off their biblical expertise. Once Augustine alluded obliquely to a man who, while "coming to marry a foreign-born wife," met a "roaring lion" and strangled it. The crowd immediately shouted, "Samson, Samson," before he could give the name.[54] They also would try to outguess him, and when they saw him winding his way toward a favorite theme they would begin shouting in anticipation.[55] Other times, when they felt chastised—either by the Scriptures or by what Augustine said—they would fill the church with loud sighs or groans or beat their breasts. He sometimes commented on their pious gestures: "I heard it, I heard it, I saw it. . . . I saw when you beat your breasts. Cast sin out of [your hearts]; because to beat your breast and keep doing the same thing is simply pounding in the sins like paving stones" for a road.[56]

Often the congregation applauded his musical turns of phrase, much as we might applaud a jazz trumpeter's improvisations. Once Augustine began rattling off some rhythmic phrases:

> Loved is the world,
> but let your love prefer the One by whom the world was made.
> Vast is the world,
> but more vast is the One by whom the world was made.

[52] For example, *s.* 19.4, 163B.5 (= *s. Frangip.* 5); *en. Ps.* 120.12; *Io. eu. tr.* 3.21. On the variety of audience reactions see Harmless, "A Love Supreme," 157–62; van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 270–72, 339–41, 427–32; Pontet, *L'exégèse*, 37–38.

[53] *s.* 52.13 (CCL 41Aa:68).

[54] *en. Ps.* 88.1.10 (CCL 39:1227); author's translation.

[55] *s.* 131.5, 169.7, 313B.3 (= *s. Denis* 15).

[56] *s.* 332.4 (PL 38:1465); author's translation. They also beat their breasts when saying the Lord's Prayer (*s.* 67.1). On sighing, see *s.* 151.8; on groaning, *en. Ps.* 127.9.

Beautiful is the world,
but more beautiful is the One by whom the world was made.
Alluring is the world,
but more alluring is the One by whom the world was made.[57]

As the emotional pitch of this sequence mounted, the assembly began cheering. Augustine seemed caught off guard by the outburst: "What did I say? What is there to start cheering about? Look, the problem [in the biblical text] has only just been laid out, and you've already started cheering."[58] These sermons were clearly not monological preachments but powerful, engaging dialogues. This did not mean that his hearers always agreed with him. They would, on occasion, heckle him. Nor did they hang on his every word. Sometimes a point he raised might set them off chitchatting among themselves, and one sees him periodically having to call the assembly back to order.[59] When he delivered sermons in Carthage at the behest of his friend Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, he enjoyed his most enthusiastic audiences. But things could also get rowdy. He would admonish his audience not to behave in church as they behaved in the theaters.[60] On one occasion, according to an episode described in one of the recently discovered Dolbeau sermons, their boisterous unruliness literally drove Augustine out of the pulpit.[61]

[57] *s.* 96.4 (PL 38:586–87); author's translation, *AOW*, 133.

[58] *s.* 96.4 (PL 38:587); author's translation, *AOW*, 133.

[59] *Io. eu. tr.* 37.7, 19.5; *s.* 23.8.

[60] *s.* 359B.23 (= *s. Dolbeau* 2; *Vingt-six*, 344).

[61] William Harmless, "The Voice and the Word: Augustine's Catechumenate in the Light of the Dolbeau Sermons," *Augustinian Studies* 35 (2004): 26–28. Augustine describes the events in *s.* 359B (= *Dolbeau* 2), but it is not easy to piece together the exact sequence and choreography. For an attempt to sort through the evidence and match it to known archaeological evidence, see Noël Duval, "Commentaire topographique et archéologique de sept dossiers des nouveaux sermons," in *Augustin Prédicateur*, esp. 179–93; on Augustine's rhetoric see S. A. H. Kennell, "*Vt adhuc habeat fides nostra reporbatores:* Augustine's Hostile Hearers," in *Augustin Prédicateur*, 343–52.

Most of the time when the assembly shouted or applauded they were signaling that they understood, that they had followed the train of thought or appreciated the cogency of argument. So ingrained was this pattern that Augustine used it as a barometer of his pedagogy. As he noted in a treatise on preaching: "The speaker should be especially attentive to come to the aid of the silent. Now an enthusiastic crowd, eager to learn, usually shows by its behavior whether it has understood things, and, until it does, the speaker needs to keep going over and over whatever he is discussing in a whole variety of different ways."[62] He made this principle central to his practice. In one case he noticed shouts from only one part of the assembly: "Those of you who clapped and applauded have understood; but for the sake of those who haven't understood, permit me, you who have done so, to open up for a few moments what I have just said."[63] Or, as he says in another sermon: "Those of you who have foreseen my drift in your minds, please think of those who walk a little slower. Slow your pace down a bit, that you do not leave behind your slower companions."[64]

(3) *THE* DISCIPLINA ARCANI

Caring for those who "walked a little slower" was Augustine's working pedagogical principle. There was one important exception: handling the catechumens' ignorance of sacraments. On other matters he used to speak as long as was needed to win their applause, but the sacraments posed a unique pastoral and pedagogical problem. In Augustine's church, as elsewhere, the *disciplina arcani* was still in force. As he put it in one sermon: "Now what is hidden in the Church and not open to public view? The sacrament of baptism, the sacrament of the Eucharist."[65] Problems arose whenever a Scripture passage had baptismal or eucharistic

[62] *doctr. chr.* 4.10.25 (CCL 32:133); author's translation, *AOW*, 134.

[63] *s.* 335A.2 (= *s. Frangip.* 6; MA 1:221); trans. Hill, WSA III/9:212. See also *s.* 52.20, 101.9, 163B.5 (= *s. Frangip.* 5); 164.3.

[64] *s.* 169.7 (PL 38:919); author's translation. See also *s.* 101.9; *en. ps.* 90.2.1.

[65] *en. Ps.* 103.1.14 (CSEL 95.1:130); trans. Boulding, WSA III/19:124 (modified).

overtones, for example, mention of the Red Sea or manna or the sacrifice of Melchizedek. At that moment the congregation split. The baptized would cheer the moment they spotted these foreshadowings of the sacraments, while the catechumens would stand silently wondering what all the fuss was about. This left Augustine in a quandary. On the one hand, his pedagogical instincts dictated that he turn and explain things to the catechumens. On the other, his respect for church tradition dictated that he not violate anything as venerable as the *disciplina arcani*. Augustine presumed that such liturgical traditions held some inner wisdom. As he saw it, the wisdom of the *disciplina arcani* lay in its ability to prick the curiosity of the catechumens. As he noted in one sermon: "The sacraments of the faithful are not divulged to [catechumens]; . . . that they may be more passionately desired by them, they are honorably concealed from their view."[66]

This judgment shaped how Augustine handled the divide in the congregation. Once, in a sermon on Psalm 80, he mentioned the Red Sea, noting that it meant "nothing else but the sacrament of the baptized." He then turned to the catechumens: "Why then are you afraid to approach Christ's baptism, you who have not come yet, why fear to cross the Red Sea? . . . You will hear an utterance strange to you, one which the initiated know already and recognize, bearing witness to something of which they have experience. You will hear where you must fix your heart." He evidently pauses here because of the cheering, then continues: "When I remarked on that just now, many people understood and shouted their agreement, but the rest stood there dumb because what they heard was speech unfamiliar to them. Let these latter hurry up, let them cross the sea and learn it."[67]

He used the same tactic when he preached on John 6, the discourse on the Bread of Life. Augustine knew that the call to eat the Lord's flesh and drink his blood made no sense to those who had never seen the Eucharist. So he turned first to the baptized, then to the baffled catechumens: "As we heard when the holy gospel

[66] *Io. eu. tr.* 96.3 (CCL 36:571); author's translation.

[67] *en. Ps.* 80.8 (CCL 39:1124); trans. Boulding, WSA III/18:158.

was being read, the Lord Jesus Christ has encouraged us with the promise of eternal life to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Some of you who heard this already do it, others not yet. I mean, those of you who have been baptized and are believers know what he was talking about. But those of you who are still catechumens, or hearers so-called, could indeed be hearers when it was read, but hardly also understanders."[68] Then, using one of his favorite rhetorical devices, the soliloquy, he role-played a baffled catechumen: "Perhaps just now, while the gospel was being read, you say to yourselves, 'Can we guess what he means when he says, "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (Jn 6:55)? How can the Lord's flesh be eaten and the Lord's blood be drunk? I can't imagine what he means.' "[69] Augustine then made his pitch:

> It's veiled in secrecy; but if you like, it will be unveiled. Come to the point of professing the faith, and you will have solved the problem. . . . You, though, are called a catechumen, you're a hearer, and yet you're deaf. . . . Look, it's Easter time, put your name down for baptism. If the festival doesn't get you excited, at least let curiosity lead you on so that you may learn what is meant. . . . "Knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Lk 11:9), so I too am knocking, open the door for me, I'm shouting in your ears, but I'm knocking at your breast.[70]

[68] *s.* 132.1 (PL 38:734); trans. Hill, WSA III/4:325.

[69] *s.* 132.1 (PL 38:735); trans. Hill, WSA III/4:325.

[70] *s.* 132.1 (PL 38:735); trans. Hill, WSA III/4:325–26. Appeals of this sort are not uncommon: *en. Ps.* 109.17; *Io. eu. tr.* 10.10, 11.1-4, 12.3, 44.2; *s.* 97A.1-4 (= *s. Casin.* 2.114-15), 135.1, 136B.1 (= *s. Lambot* 10), 392.5. Of special interest is the recently discovered *s.* 352A.3-4 (= *s. Dolbeau* 14), in which Augustine plays off Mark 1:15 ("repent and believe in the Gospel"), noting that catechumens may "believe in the Gospel" but they have not yet "repented"; Augustine adds: "Let the catechumens listen to the Acts of the Apostles," then cites Acts 2:37-38 ("repent, and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ") to admonish them to turn in their names for baptism. Also of special interest is another newly discovered sermon, *s.* 142 (= *s. Dolbeau* 7), on the burial of a catechumen. I analyze this in the excursus at the end of this chapter for what it says about the supposed "delay" of baptism.

Here Augustine touched on a spectrum of emotions: he toyed with their curiosity; he prodded them with sarcasm; he played on their enthusiasm for festivals; he promised that he and they would enjoy a new common bond. Augustine was certainly willing to exploit this divide, if only to get catechumens to put in their names for baptism. Ultimately, though, he yearned only to share with them a *gnosis* the church reserved for the baptized. As a rule Augustine disdained anything that smacked of elitism. He scoffed at cultured snobs and railed against the rival Donatist church with its claims of purity and its sectarian separation from other Christians around the world. So this division within his own congregation bothered him. Thus the rousing appeals. He wanted to dismantle the barriers such readings created, but he knew he could pull down the walls only if they heard him "knocking" and so enrolled for the Lenten training.

A SEASONED RHETORIC: THE METHOD

In his sermons, as in all his works, Augustine remained a verbal virtuoso, yet he subjected that virtuosity to the demands of the liturgical setting and to the needs of his noisy and diverse audience, many of whom were catechumens. His sermons display a distinctive rhetorical style. Here he consciously flouted the rhetorical status quo, those cumbersome rules and canons promoted by the schools of his day. As he put it in one sermon: "What do the rules of grammarians matter to us? Better you should understand . . . than be left high and dry on the heights of our eloquence."[71] Augustine knew that the rhetorical fineries of the schools—the arcane vocabulary, the subtle allusions to the classics, the studiously correct diction—would mar the directness he needed to touch the uneducated and the catechumens within his assembly. As he once put it, "Of what use is a golden key if it is unable to

[71] *en. Ps.* 36.3.6 (CCL 38:371); author's translation. See Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 47–84, 505–40. Philip Burton, "Augustine and Language," in *Companion to Augustine*, 118–22, distinguishes three distinct styles: a "Ciceronian style" in erudite treatises such as *De ciuitate dei*, an "oral style" in the sermons, and a "middle" poetic style in *Confessiones.*

open what we desire?"[72] And what Augustine wished to open was his hearers' minds and hearts, open them to the dazzling mystery of God and the weighty demands of Christian life. He thus sought "clarity," not "cultivation," and adopted—in a phrase he lifted from Cicero's *Orator*—"a kind of studied neglect."[73] This did not mean he was careless, nor did he, as a rule, resort to street Latin. Rather, he retained the elegant Latin of the elite but pruned it down to such simplicity that even the least educated could follow him.[74] This "superbly unaffected 'Christian' style," as Peter Brown notes, "was in reality a simplicity achieved on the other side of vast sophistication."[75]

Simplicity did not mean a lack of ornamentation. Far from it. Augustine's language is studded with musical figures and word-plays. As he once put it, speech, like "food, without which we cannot live, must be spiced."[76] And the "spices" he pulled from his rhetorical pantry were well suited to the tastes of his uneducated audience: puns, jingling rhymes, long chains of alliterations, paradoxes, and antitheses.[77] These ornaments made his ideas at once entertaining and memorable, for he knew his people had fine-tuned oral memories and could snap up and retain his catchy phrases.[78] These ornaments—it should also be remembered—were not written out beforehand but were improvised on the spot. Such improvisational skills were an essential part of the art—so much so that Henri-Iréné Marrou once compared ancient oratory to jazz, noting that "improvisation . . . is always greatly helped by a well-stocked memory—as anyone will soon find out if he wants to

[72] *doctr. chr.* 4.11.26 (CCL 32:134); author's translation, *AOW*, 131.

[73] Cicero, *Orator* 23.75: "*diligentem neglegentiam*," quoted by Augustine in *doctr. chr.* 4.10.24 (CCL 32:132); author's translation.

[74] Mohrmann, "Saint Augustin prédicateur," 89.

[75] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 265.

[76] *doctr. chr.* 4.11.26 (CCL 32:135); author's translation.

[77] Mohrmann, "Augustine and the *Eloquentia*," 363–68, who roots Augustine's use of rhyme and other forms of wordplay in popular parlance.

[78] Ibid., 367.

develop a 'hot' technique in playing jazz."[79] Much as jazz musicians have at their fingertips a wide repertoire of musical devices, so too did Augustine and his contemporaries. Augustine's verbal style might seem spicy to our taste, yet in his own time the Second Sophistic movement was the rhetorical rage, and Christian preachers in the Greek East, like Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, could cook up even spicier fare for their congregations.

Augustine was not only an accomplished orator but also an ex-teacher of oratory, and he brought together his reflections in an influential treatise: *De doctrina christiana*.[80] The title is best translated not as *On Christian Doctrine* but rather as *On Christian Teaching*, or even *On Teaching Christianity*. Its first three books focus on biblical interpretation and were written around 397, soon after Augustine became bishop of Hippo. We will examine these in a moment. He left the treatise incomplete for decades, but sometime around 426 he brought it to a close, adding a fourth book on the art of preaching.

[79] Henri-Iréné Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 200. In "A Love Supreme: Augustine's 'Jazz' of Theology," 149, I give precision to this apt comparison, arguing that we need greater sensitivity to performance practices and improvisation and that we need performative categories (like those musicologists use) to chart the way Augustine does "live theology."

[80] Essential studies of *De doctrina christiana* include Harald Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*. Studia Graeca et Latina XX. 2 vols. in 1 (Guteborg: Acta Universitatis Cothoburgensis, 1967), esp. 1:156–67 and 2:553–69; Gerald A. Press, "The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980): 99–124; Duane W. H. Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds., *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Karla Pollmann, *Doctrina Christiana: Untersuchungen zu den Anfängen der christlichen Hermeneutik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Augustinus*, De doctrina christiana (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1996); eadem, "*Doctrina christiana* (*De-*)," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996): 551–75; Isabelle Bochet and Goulven Madec, "Notes complémentaires," 428–590 in *La doctrine chrétienne:* De doctrina christiana, BA 11/2 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997); Jean-Paul Bouhot, "Augustin prédicateur d'après le *De doctrina christiana*," 49–61 in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur*; Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 215–50.

This final book, while brief, has special poignancy because its reflections come after he had spent more than three decades as a preacher.

He opens Book 4 of *On Christian Teaching* with a plea, noting that rhetoric was an art in itself indifferent, that it could be used to persuade people to good or to evil. He lamented that those who seek selfish or evil ends are often skilled in the art. They know how "to convince people of falsehoods . . . grab their attention . . . how to inspire fear, to move hearers to tears, to get them laughing or burning with enthusiasm," while often "defenders of truth make their case in ways too boring to listen to, too convoluted to understand . . . and end up putting people to sleep." So he pleaded: "Look, the capacity for eloquence—so very effective in persuading people to either wrong or right—is available to both sides. Why, then, do the good not acquire the skill to battle for truth, if the wicked, in order to win unjustifiable and baseless cases, usurp it on behalf of injustice and error?"[81]

In this treatise Augustine set out ways that Christian teachers might find an eloquence in harmony with the specifics of their task. He admitted his brief essay-length work was no substitute textbook.[82] He also granted that some of what standard textbooks contained had value, but he warned, much as Cicero had, that the widespread obsession with rhetorical rules was futile. No performing orator in the heat of the moment had the luxury of remembering rules. Great orators "fulfilled [rules] because they were eloquent; they did not apply them that they might be eloquent." Augustine had grown skeptical about rhetorical schooling. He came to share Cicero's view: that to learn the art one needed raw talent, much practice, and good models: "Given a bright and eager disposition, eloquence will come more readily to those who read and listen to eloquent speakers than to those who pore over the rules of eloquence."[83]

[81] *doctr. chr.* 4.2.3 (CCL 32:117); author's translation, *AOW*, 130–31.

[82] *doctr. chr.* 4.1.2 (CCL 32:116). See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 567.

[83] *doctr. chr.* 4.3.4 (CCL 32:118); trans. Edmund Hill, *Teaching Christianity*, WSA I/11:202. This paraphrases Cicero's dictum in *De oratore* I.146 and II.90.

So, Augustine worked to cut through the morass of ancient rhetorical theory and zero in on what he had found, from a lifetime of teaching, to be indispensable.[84] He devoted his attention mainly to two matters: the three aims of the orator and the three styles. Echoing Cicero, he insisted that "an eloquent person should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights, and persuades."[85] Of these three aims teaching came first, both logically and temporally. If one looks at Augustine's sermons it is clear that this teaching moment could last from a few seconds to a few minutes, just long enough to explain some morsel of truth. He admitted that, in theory, simply teaching might suffice, that people "will be moved in such a way that there is no need for them to be moved any more by greater eloquence."[86] This, while theoretically possible, was not the usual case: "Only a few listeners . . . and those the most serious, are eager to know what there is to be learned, however dismally and crudely it is expressed."[87] This meant that the second aim, delight, was required. In most cases "the listener needs to be entertained to keep a firm grip on him as a listener."[88] Augustine's sermons bear this out. Rare are the passages in which he does not indulge in at least a few verbal fireworks. Still, of these three aims Augustine, like Cicero, gave the greatest weight to the third, persuasion: "Therefore, the eloquent churchman, when he is trying to persuade people that something be done, must not only teach in order to instruct and entertain in order to hold their attention, but he must also persuade them in order that he may be victorious."[89] Augustine knew that too often a gap existed between knowing a truth and doing it. Merely instructing the mind missed the mark.

[84] Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 567.

[85] *doctr. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 32:135); author's translation. Augustine here is quoting Cicero, *Orator* 21.69, but with a difference: where Cicero has "prove" (*probare*), Augustine has "teach" (*docere*). Cicero's orator is in a courtroom; Augustine has an ecclesial context in mind. See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 163.

[86] *doctr. chr.* 4.12.28 (CCL 32:135); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:216.

[87] *doctr. chr.* 4.11.26 (CCL 32:134); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:215.

[88] *doctr. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 32:135); author's translation, *AOW*, 136.

[89] *doctr. chr.* 4.13.29 (CCL 32:136–37); author's translation, *AOW*, 136.

Education meant doing more. Listeners "must thus be persuaded, not only that they may know what should be done, but also that they may do what they already know they should do."[90]

Augustine then inquired: if the ultimate aim is persuasion, how does one persuade? This led to his next topic, the three styles. He repeated the standard textbook view that three such styles exist: the subdued (*summissa*), the moderate (*temperata*), and the grand (*grandis*). By "subdued" he and contemporaries did not mean colloquial—their language was too stylized to be that—but rather straightforward, prosaic. The "moderate," by contrast, meant ornamented, adorned with musical figures and wordplays. The "grand"—at least as Augustine understood it—sometimes involved ornaments, sometimes not. The difference lay not in ornamentation but in "the way it gives vent to the spirit's passionate feelings . . . it is driven on by its own fervor, and, if it chances upon any beauty of style, it seizes upon it and claims it, not because of any concern for beauty, but because of the sheer force of the subject matter."[91]

Cicero, like other theorists, had spelled out when to use each style: "One will therefore be eloquent who can speak about minor matters in a subdued style, ordinary matters in a moderate style, and noble matters in a grand style."[92] Augustine felt this principle needed significant adjusting, for in preaching "everything we say is of great importance" since it touches on people's "eternal welfare." One might speak of a trivial amount of money when preaching on the story of the widow's mite, but this did not dictate using the subdued style since "justice is not small."[93] On the other hand, one did not necessarily speak in the grand style about matters of faith simply because they were always weighty. Instead, "one and the same great matter is spoken of calmly if it is being taught,

[90] *doctr. chr.* 4.12.27 (CCL 32:135); author's translation, *AOW*, 136.

[91] *doctr. chr.* 4.20.42 (CCL 32:148-149); author's translation. *AOW*, 137-138.

[92] Cicero, *Orator* 29.101, quoted by Augustine in *doctr. chr.* 4.17.34 (CCL 32:141); author's translation, *AOW*, 137. See Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 164–67.

[93] *doctr. chr.* 4.18.35 (CCL 32:141–42); author's translation.

moderately if it is being proclaimed and preached, and grandly if spirits that have turned away from it are being urged to turn back and be converted."[94]

The speaker, like the musician, had to modulate. To remain in one style too long would lose the listener. Instead, one blended the three styles so that "our speech ebbs and flows like the waves of the sea."[95] Augustine's practice bears out the principle. In his sermons he began, often enough, in the moderate style to draw in his listeners, to render them, according to Cicero's dictum, "benevolent, attentive, docile."[96] Then he would dip to the subdued: listing arguments, role-playing both sides of a heated debate, launching into a staccato rhythm of question and answer. Then he would shift to the moderate, now praising, now denouncing, all the while piling up image upon image, ornament upon ornament. Then he would shift again, either returning to the subdued or leaping to the grand, and if he leapt his voice would grow fervent, infusing musical figures—whether parallelisms, alliterations, or antitheses—with passion until finally he would snap things to a close with a cadenza of rhymed admonitions. Here he might end, or more often change, registers, slipping back to the subdued, to begin a new theme.

Cicero had taught that there was a link between the three aims and the three styles: that in teaching one used the subdued; in delighting, the moderate; in persuading, the grand.[97] Augustine agreed, but with certain reservations. He found his subdued style could be equally delightful:

> It often happens that a speech in the subdued style, when it solves very difficult questions and demonstrates things with unexpected clarity, or when it elicits and displays highly acute insights from sources from which nothing was expected, or when it clearly refutes

[94] *doctr. chr.* 4.19.38 (CCL 32:144); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:222.

[95] *doctr. chr.* 4.22.51 (CCL 32:158); author's translation, *AOW*, 138.

[96] *doctr. chr.* 4.23.52 (CCL 32:158). In 4.4.6 he alludes to Cicero, *De oratore* 2.80, that at the opening one makes the audience "*beneuolos, intentos, dociles*."

[97] *doctr. chr.* 4.17.34 (CCL 32:141).

> the error of its opponents and demonstrates what seemed irrefutable to be false—especially when one's words have a certain beauty, unsought-for but somehow natural, and use rhythmic sentence endings, put in not for show, but as though essential, drawn from the subject itself—this subdued style often occasions such thunderous applause that it is hardly even recognized as subdued.[98]

Similarly, Augustine did not always resort to the grand style when he wanted to persuade. He tended rather to reserve it for one urgent case: whenever "the hard heart" needed "to be bent to obedience."[99] He thus remarked: "If a speaker is applauded repeatedly and eagerly, we should not, for that reason, believe that he is speaking in the grand style. Keenness of intellect in the subdued style and the rhetorical embellishments of the moderate style also have this effect. The grand style, by its weight, is able not only to make voices hush, but also to make tears gush. . . . [The effect of the grand style] . . . is not the roar of applause, but rather people's groans, sometimes even their tears, but ultimately a change in their lives."[100] To illustrate this, Augustine cited a personal experience. Once he journeyed to Caesarea in Mauretania to convince the citizens there to abandon an ancient custom. Apparently for a few days each year locals carried on a sort of ritualized civil war. They divided into two camps and then stoned, even killed, anyone from the other side. To these people, Augustine gave an impassioned appeal, and its passion won not their applause but their tears and, more important, their abandoning of the brutal custom.[101]

Augustine acknowledged that while the facile parallelism between the three aims and the three styles had a certain validity, one could not press the matter too far. Rather, "it is the universal task

[98] *doctr. chr.* 4.26.56 (CCL 32:162); author's translation, *AOW*, 139–40. As for the phrase "voices hush . . . tears gush" (*voces premit, sed lacrimas exprimit*), I draw this felicitous rhyme from Hill, WSA I/11:234.

[99] *doctr. chr.* 4.26.58 (CCL 32:163); author's translation.

[100] *doctr. chr.* 4.24.53 (CCL 32:159–60); author's translation, *AOW*, 138–39.

[101] *doctr. chr.* 4.24.53 (CCL 32:159). On this episode see Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 10–28.

of eloquence, in whichever of the three styles, to speak in a way geared to persuading."[102] Persuasion was the bottom line, and by persuasion Augustine meant not nodding assent, but moral living. While he certainly wanted people both informed and fervent, what he wanted even more was people who enfleshed their faith, embodied its charity, and enacted its justice. As he remarked in one sermon: "Look here, you're a Christian, you come regularly to church, you hear the word of God, you are moved to raptures by the readings from God's word. You praise the preacher to high heaven." (The congregation had been loudly cheering). "You, I repeat, praise the speaker. I in turn want your actions to match it."[103]

Augustine insisted that good living was itself eloquent speech. This was certainly true of the teacher: "Whatever the grandeur of the speaker's utterances, his manner of life carries more weight."[104] That was no less true of ordinary Christians whose lives had an eloquence all their own.[105] So Augustine used to exhort the baptized to lead masterful lives, ones that catechumens might imitate: "It's for you to encourage [the catechumens] in this, not by words but by your behavior; those who haven't yet been baptized should be in a hurry to follow you."[106] He likewise encouraged the catechumens to find good models: "A word to the catechumens: Be impatient and on fire in your determination to receive grace. But choose for yourselves the right people in the Church of God to imitate."[107]

SCRIPTURE AND ITS RIDDLES: THE CORE CURRICULUM

In the end Augustine saw verbal finesse simply as a useful tool. He reminded readers of *On Christian Teaching* of an often-ignored truism from the rhetorical tradition: that eloquence, to be of value, must root itself in wisdom.[108] And for Augustine the Christian

[102] *doctr. chr.* 4.25.55 (CCL 32:160); author's translation, *AOW*, 139.
[103] *s.* 178.7 (PL 38:964); trans. Hill, WSA III/5:293 (modified).
[104] *doctr. chr.* 4.27.59 (CCL 32:163); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:237.
[105] *doctr. chr.* 4.29.62 (CCL 32:165–67).
[106] *s.* 132.2 (PL 38:735); trans. Hill, WSA III/4:326.
[107] *s.* 392.6 (PL 39:1712); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:424.
[108] *doctr. chr.* 4.5.7 (CCL 32:120), quoting Cicero, *De inventione* I.1.

bishop, the only wisdom worthy of the name was the Bible.[109] Thus he insisted that the Christian orator was, first and foremost, "an expositor and teacher of the divine Scriptures."[110] "Expositor" (*tractator*) seems too neutral, too detached a term to communicate the urgency Augustine brought to the task. As he said in a letter to Jerome, the foremost biblical scholar of the age: "I do not have, nor could I have, such great knowledge of the divine Scriptures as I see that you have. And if I have some ability in this area, I pay it out completely for the people of God."[111] Augustine again and again used such monetary metaphors to explain his task. He thought himself a debtor, and in preaching he paid off his debts with borrowed coinage: "I have given you what I have received. . . . It's the Lord's money; I am only the distributor of it."[112]

[109] *doctr. chr.* 4.5.8 (CCL 32:121).

[110] *doctr. chr.* 4.4.6 (CCL 32:119); author's translation. On this terminology see Mohrmann, "Praedicare—tractare—sermo," in eadem, *Études sur le latin des Chrétiens*, 4 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1958–77) 2:63–72. For a brief overview of Augustine's theory and practices as a biblical interpreter see Michael Cameron, "Augustine and Scripture," 200–14 in *Companion to Augustine*; on Augustine's evolution as an interpreter see Isabelle Bochet, "*Le Firmament de l'Écriture": L'hermeneutique augustinienne*, CEASA 172 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2004), and Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*. See also Pamela Bright, ed., *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); Frederick van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt, eds., *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, Collectanea Augustiniana 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). It is important to situate Augustine's theories and practices within the broader landscape of patristic exegesis. For an introduction see John J. O'Keefe and Russell R. Reno, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Frances Young, "Interpretation of the Bible," 845–63 in *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[111] *ep.* 73.5 (CCL 31A:47); trans. Teske, WSA II/1:275 (modified). On Jerome see Megan Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[112] *s.* 260D.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 18; MA 1:500); trans. Hill, WSA III/17:203. The theme of preaching as paying off debts appears often: *s.* 1.1, 4.1, 179A.8 (= *s. Wilm.* 2); *en. Ps.* 88.2.1, 95.1; *Io. eu. tr.* 6.1.

The catechumens in Augustine's assembly would have received this biblical coinage in abundance. His sermons teem with biblical quotations, biblical allusions, biblical images. Augustine did more than comment on the Bible: he *spoke* Bible, making its words his words. In preaching on a biblical text he did not look for some single connecting theme, nor did he reduce it to "three points" as modern preachers often do. Rather, he read it verse by verse, even word by word, straining each phrase, each word, for its submerged resonances, its mystical glimmerings and moral import. He and his Christian contemporaries had inherited such practices from ancient literary critics, the *grammatici*. These "grammatical" methods led them to focus on terse snippets of text, on odd or beautiful turns of phrase. More deeply, it reflected their mode of perception, what Marrou has called "a sort of psychological atomism."[113] Ancient Christian commentators tended to locate truth—or more precisely, the experience of it—in brief fleeting insights, in sudden breakthroughs that came from contemplating small fragments. This did not mean they neglected synthesis: far from it, but their construction techniques differed from those of later ages. They did not create vast theological systems like the medievals. They had no theological Gothic cathedrals. Their syntheses were smaller, denser, more jagged—a theological equivalent of the brilliant mosaics of their day. And these commentators treated the words of Scripture the same way mosaic artists treated their tesserae—as jewel-like fragments to be plucked up, admired, and patiently pieced together. The end result tended to spark.

Augustine thought of the Bible as a sort of hypertext, with every phrase, every word linked to dozens and dozens of other texts within the Bible's vast web of meaning. Only by clicking, so to speak, on those links would a text's wealth of meanings be rolled out. For example, in a sermon on Psalm 119, Augustine ranged about literally from Genesis to Revelation, quoting or echoing

[113] Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 25–26. See also Joseph T. Lienhard, "Reading the Bible and Learning to Read: The Influence of Education on St. Augustine's Exegesis," *Augustinian Studies* 27 (1996): 7–25.

thirty-seven different verses (not counting those from the psalm that was his focus).[114] As Brown notes: "This method of exegesis, which involved creating a whole structure of verbal echoes, linking every part of the Bible, was particularly well-suited to teaching [a] hitherto quite unknown text, to an audience used to memorizing by ear."[115] This quote-and-echo technique was both venerable and stylish. Late Roman orators were trained to lace their speeches with phrases snatched from the classics. Augustine and his fellow Christian preachers mined their classic the same way.

Educated catechumens would have found the technique familiar. What would have struck them as odd, even gauche, was applying it to the Christian Bible. The Bible Augustine used, the *Vetus Latina*, was, in their eyes, too crude to merit the status of a classic. It had too much jargon, too many neologisms, too many awkward turns of phrase.[116] As a young man Augustine had been put off by its diction, presuming what all educated persons took for granted: How could something be wise that was not also eloquent?[117] We saw earlier that Augustine never failed to address the issue with inquirers with run-of-the-mill educations. But in his sermons he displays a different attitude. He makes few apologies. Instead he savors, even celebrates, his Bible's sometimes ungainly vocabulary, its foreign imagery, its strange leaps of logic. In the course of a sermon he often repeats biblical phrases again and again as though he were chewing on them, savoring their sweetness. The exotic melodies of Jewish thought intrigued him, much as the exotic melodies of the gypsies intrigued the young Bela Bartók. And like Bartók, Augustine let his own classically trained harmonies be transfigured by his source's off-kilter folk rhythms and robust musicality.

Augustine believed that the wisdom of Scripture lay beneath its simple surface. As he said in a letter to Volusianus, the pagan aristocrat:

[114] *en. Ps.* 119 (CSEL 95.3:37–57). For a discussion see chap. 5.
[115] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 251.
[116] See Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 473–77.
[117] *conf.* 3.5.9 (CCL 27:30–31).

> The very language in which Holy Scripture is woven is accessible to all, though very, very few penetrate it. In its easily understood parts it speaks to the heart of the unlearned and learned like a familiar friend who uses no guile, but in those truths it veils in mystery, it does not raise itself aloft with proud speech. Hence, the backward and untutored mind dares to draw near to it as a poor man to a rich one because it invites all in simple language and feeds their minds with its teachings in plain words, while training them in the truth by its hidden message, having the same effect in both the obvious and the obscure. But lest the obvious should cause disgust, the hidden truths arouse longing; longing brings renewal; renewal brings sweet inner knowledge.[118]

These hidden truths fascinated Augustine. His sermons typically move from one "veiled mystery" to another. He approached the Scriptures with the intensity of a detective:

> *Factum audiuimus,* We've heard what happened;
> *mysterium requiramus.* let's delve into the mystery.[119]

Augustine's hearers shared his enthusiasm and keenly enjoyed the way he would untie the "scroll-covers" and "unroll" what lay hidden within.[120] The more subtle his decoding, the more they cheered. This intrigued them much as detective stories or courtroom dramas intrigue us. Augustine's approach was much like that of a detective or a lawyer. He always had his eye out for odd clues, for things covered in "so dense and dark a fog":[121] exotic place names, strange animals, numbers, double entendres, quirky metaphors. These he put under his magnifying glass, for he presumed they opened hidden doorways into larger, unexpected mysteries. After singling out one such detail he typically scoured the

[118] *ep.* 137.5.18 (CSEL 44:123); trans. Wilfrid Parsons, *AOW*, 163. See J. Patout Burns, "Delighting the Spirit: Augustine's Practice of Figurative Interpretation," 182–94 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*.

[119] *Io. eu. tr.* 50.6 (CCL 36:435); author's translation.

[120] *en. Ps.* 147.23 (CSEL 95.5:233); author's translation.

[121] *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7 (CCL 32:35); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:131.

Scriptures from end to end, searching for clues that might unravel the knot, crack open the case. Sherlock Holmes used to tell Dr. Watson that some things were elementary. Augustine had a similar view: "Practically nothing is dug out from those obscurities which is not found plainly said somewhere else."[122]

Augustine did not deny that the Scriptures recorded history. In fact, he solemnly warned that if the events the Scriptures described had not taken place, then one "would be trying to build castles in the air."[123] But for him the Bible contained much more than accounts of the past. Its words possessed a built-in divine pedagogy that drew in readers, wooing them to open its doorways and chase down its many mysteries. As he told one correspondent, there was something about human psychology that made the Bible's hidden truths more compelling:

> All those elements (in the biblical text) which are presented to us in symbolic figures tend in some way to nourish and fan the very flame of love by which we are carried, as though weightless, upward or inward toward rest. What's more, these things stir us up and enkindle love better than if they were set before us unadorned, without any of the semblances of mysteries. It is hard to explain the reason for this. Nonetheless it is true that any matter suggested through its allegorical meaning affects us more, delights us more, is appreciated more than if it were set out openly in plain words.[124]

This perspective is one Augustine had learned from Ambrose. As we saw, Ambrose's allegorical readings of the Old Testament proved pivotal to the thirty-year-old Augustine, provoking an intellectual landslide that laid the groundwork for his eventual conversion. Augustine brought that core lesson to his North African congregation, introducing catechumens and baptized alike to the mysteries he discovered embedded within the Bible's densities. Scholars sometimes label Augustine's method of biblical interpretation "allegorical." It is true that, from time to time, he

[122] *doctr. chr.* 2.6.8 (CCL 32:36); author's translation, *AOW*, 174.
[123] *s.* 2.7 (CCL 41:14); trans. Hill, WSA III/1:179.
[124] *ep.* 55.21 (CCL 31:250); author's translation. Cf. *doctr. chr.* 2.6.8, 4.7.15.

used the term, as in the passage above. But his usual word was "figurative."[125] He read biblical words (and biblical events) as "figures," that is, as signs, as pointers to other realities, whether other historical events or, more often, subtle invisible truths about us and about God. He not only practiced figurative methods in the daily routine of his sermons; he took special care to justify their place within a broader theory of interpretation in his treatise *On Christian Teaching*. Earlier we looked at this work's fourth book, which focused on the art of preaching and was composed at the very end of his career. But the work's first three books were written thirty years earlier, around 397, soon after his consecration as bishop.[126] The inspiration for writing such a handbook may have come from Tyconius (d. ca. 400), a lay Donatist theologian who, in the late 380s, had written the *Book of Rules* (*Liber regularum*).[127] Tyconius

[125] Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 17–18, notes that while Augustine used the term "allegory" early in his career he gradually shifted his vocabulary (perhaps some heard the term as undermining historical realities), and he came to prefer "figure" in its various forms (*figura*, *figuraliter*, *figurata*, etc.). For details see ibid., 297–98nn21, 25.

[126] *retr.* 2.4.1 (CCL 57:92–93): Augustine notes that he broke off at *doctr. chr.* 3.25.35. See Charles Kannengeiser, "The Interrupted *De doctrina christiana*," 3–13 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*. The first two books circulated independently, as evidenced by an early manuscript dating from Augustine's own lifetime; see Kenneth B. Steinhauser, "Codex Leningradensis Q.v.13: Some Unresolved Problems," 33–43 in *De doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*; Kenneth B. Steinhauser, "From Russia with Love: Deciphering Augustine's Code," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22 (2014): 1–20.

[127] Unlike other works of his, Augustine does not say precisely what occasioned his writing of *doctr. chr.* We know he read Tyconius around this time, as he mentions it in *ep.* 41. We also know that for his actual exegetical practices Augustine drew inspiration from Tyconius's principles. But the principles he sets out in *doctr. chr.* are very different from Tyconius's and are more in line with his philosophical orientation and his rhetorical and literary training. For the text and a translation see William R. Babcock, ed., *Tyconius: The Book of Rules*, Texts and Translations (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); for a study see Pamela Bright, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius: Its Purpose and Inner Logic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). Augustine's treatise may also have been prompted by requests from those in his monastery, or by Aurelius of Carthage, or others.

claimed to offer "mystic keys" that unlocked the Bible's "closed doors" and enabled one to walk sure-footedly through its "vast forest of prophecy . . . as by pathways of light."[128]

In these first three books of *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine meditated on many matters: philosophical reflections on signs and the origins of human language, a listing of books that comprise the biblical canon, the vagaries of the *Vetus Latina*, the need to read biblical languages to check errors in translation, the need for solid background knowledge in world history, the arts, biblical geography, and all sorts of arcane tidbits such as terms for foreign weights and coinage.[129] He presumed that "the most expert investigator of the divine Scriptures" had not only read and mastered the Bible in its entirety but probably had also memorized large portions.[130] With all that data one could become so immersed in minutiae that one lost sight of the forest for the trees. His treatise thus focuses mostly on the big picture. It is what we would call a work of hermeneutics, that is, the science of interpretation, and charts out certain core principles.[131] This was not literary interpretation for its own sake. As he notes, "What those who fear God and have a docile piety are looking for in all these books is the will of God."[132] That was the central task of the biblical interpreter: to find God's will both for himself and for those he taught. The problem was that "casual readers are misled by the [Scriptures'] many and multiple sorts of obscurities and ambiguities, misjudging one

[128] Tyconius, *Liber regularum*, praef., quoted by Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 3.30.43 (CCL 32:103); author's translation.

[129] *doctr. chr.* 2.32.50-37.55; 2.11.16-15.22; 2.25.38-30.47.

[130] *doctr. chr.* 2.8.12 (CCL 32:38); author's translation.

[131] More precisely, Books I–III focus on *inventio* (the *res*, or "subject matter") for one's discourse, whereas Book IV focuses on *elocutio* (the *verba*, or "words") in one's discourse. This outline has become the consensus after a long debate about the purposes and structure of this treatise. For an overview see Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 559–69; Press, "Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*"; Christoph Schäublin, "*De doctrina christiana:* A Classic of Western Culture?" 47–67 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*.

[132] *doctr. chr.* 2.9.14 (CCL 32:40); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:135.

meaning for another," for "certain texts wrap themselves in the densest fog."[133]

Book I is a sort of extended preface, or prolegomenon. Augustine sets the stage with a perspective he draws from the philosopher Plotinus: the human condition is one of exile. We, like Homer's Odysseus, may yearn to get back to our homeland, but somehow along the way we have become endlessly distracted, seduced by other more immediate beauties. As Augustine puts it: "If we wish to return to our homeland, where we can be truly happy, we must use this world, and not [get lost in] enjoying it, in such a way that the 'invisible attributes of God may be clearly seen, being understood through the things that were made' (Rom 1:20)."[134] For Augustine the world around us is charged with the presence of God. What the Bible offers us is a collection of road signs that help us read that world right, that cue us into seeing God's presence within the world, and so orient us to use the world as a roadway to get back to God, our true home. That return is, he insisted, rooted in the paradox of Christ: "Though God Himself is our homeland, He has made Himself the highway to that homeland."[135]

The Bible, like certain complex maps, required sophisticated reading skills to make sense of its intricate array of symbols.[136] Augustine highlighted "two reasons why texts are not understood: they are veiled in signs that are either unknown or ambiguous. Signs, for their part, can be either literal or figurative."[137] Thus

[133] *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7 (CCL 32:35); author's translation, *AOW*, 173.

[134] *doctr. chr.* 1.4.4 (CCL 32:8); author's translation, *AOW*, 168.

[135] *doctr. chr.* 1.11.11 (CCL 32:12); author's translation., *AOW*, 168.

[136] On Augustine's sign theory see Robert A. Markus, "St. Augustine on Signs," *Phronesis* 2 (1957): 60–83; B. Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 15 (1969): 9–49; both reprinted in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1972), 61–147; David Dawson, "Sign Theory, Allegorical Reading, and Motions of the Soul in *De doctrina christiana*," 123–41 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*; Bochet and Madec, "Les signes," BA 11/2:483–95.

[137] *doctr. chr.* 2.10.15 (CCL 32:41); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:135. On these pairs (clear / obscure, literal / figurative) see Roland J. Teske, "Criteria for Figura-

there are two tasks: distinguish clear texts from obscure ones, then distinguish texts to be read literally from those to be read figuratively. In Books II and III of *On Christian Teaching* he sets out an array of strategies for sorting one's way through these two core tasks. He stressed, for example, that one must begin with clear passages, "whether precepts about how to live or rules about what to believe. . . . Only then . . . after acquiring some familiarity with the actual style of the divine Scriptures, should one proceed to open up and unravel their obscurities, in such a way that instances from clearer passages are used to cast light on the more obscure utterances."[138]

But Augustine was convinced that, despite its many, varied, and often subtle signs, the Bible was like a compass needle that pointed in just one direction: to love. The entire meaning of the Bible, Augustine insisted, lay in Christ's double commandment of love of God and love of neighbor. This core message oriented Christian life. It also oriented how one interpreted any specific biblical passage: "So whoever, in his own view, thinks he has understood the divine Scriptures, or some part of them, and yet does not, by his interpretation build up the twofold love of God and neighbor, then that person has not yet understood the text."[139] This principle shaped, for example, whether a text was to be read literally or figuratively:

> Generally, the method is this: anything in the divine words which cannot be referred either to moral integrity or to true faith you should understand as figurative. Moral integrity refers to our loving God and neighbor; true faith, to our understanding of God and neighbor. . . . So when dealing with figurative expressions, follow this basic rule: that the text being read should be turned over and over, considered diligently for a long while, until your interpretation

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tive Interpretation in St Augustine," 109–22 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*; Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 223–27.

[138] *doctr. chr.* 2.9.14 (CCL 32:41); trans. Hill, WSA I/11:135.

[139] *doctr. chr*. 1.36.40 (CCL 32:29); author's translation, *AOW*, 170. See William S. Babcock, "*Caritas* and Signification in *De doctrina christiana* 1–3," 145–63 in *De Doctrina Christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*.

> can be led over into the kingdom of love. If the text already rings true in the literal, then no figurative meaning needs to be probed for.[140]

Alert to Manichean and pagan objections to the Old Testament, Augustine had various texts and episodes in mind, for instance, Abraham's polygamy, various Jewish legal materials, accounts of deception used by Old Testament patriarchs, or brutal stories of killings and warfare. Such episodes required the interpreter to inquire how such an incident or such a law might, beneath its literal surface, point to some deeper truth about love; if it did not do so literally, then a figurative one was required. He also applied figurative methods to dense poetic passages. For example, he noted a verse from the Song of Songs: "Your teeth are as flocks of shorn sheep, which come up from the washing, all of which give birth to twins, and there is none barren among them" (Song 4:2). Augustine read this with his catechumens in mind. This passage, he argues, refers to converts who are "shorn" of "worldly burdens," whose washing is baptism, whose giving birth to twins refers to their giving birth to the twofold love of God and of neighbor, and whose own new birth bears fruit in charity and is thus not "barren."[141]

Augustine stressed not only finding the end product, that is, a sound interpretation of a text. No less important was the very *process* of interpreting, the long and winding search for meaning by the interpreter (as well as the interpreter's listeners). The Bible was packed with "divine eloquences" (*eloquia diuina*). It therefore held unusual powers. Its very language offered both food for the journey and a subtle medicine capable of healing our disfigured minds and misguided hearts. In other words, the very search for the meaning of biblical texts was itself therapeutic and nourishing: "The Holy Spirit has thus wonderfully—and for our good health—planned the holy Scriptures in such a way that in the more open

[140] *doctr. chr.* 3.10.14-3.15.23 (CCL 32:86–91); author's translation, *AOW*, 170.

[141] *doctr. chr.* 2.6.7 (CCL 32:35–36); author's translation, *AOW*, 173. He gives this very same interpretation in *en. Ps.* 3.7 (CSEL 93.1A:86–88).

passages He relieves our hunger and that in the more obscure ones He drives away our distaste."[142]

On Christian Teaching has often been treated as though it were Augustine's definitive statement on biblical interpretation. Certainly it became a profoundly influential one, helping to shape how the Bible was read for much of the Middle Ages. But in themselves its reflections remain partial and limited, even after its eventual completion.[143] Augustine had been thinking about the Bible for nearly a decade before writing it, and only a small portion of his hermeneutical perspectives make their way into its pages. It is best seen, like so many of his writings, as a work in progress, a snapshot of his thinking at a key juncture. No less important is seeing how its broad theoretical principles took flesh in his routine, day-to-day preaching. While his exegetical theories and exegetical practices cohere closely, there was nothing wooden or predictable about Augustine the exegete sitting down to the nitty-gritty task of interpreting specific texts. His theoretical statements do little to prepare one for how, in actual practice, the unexpected is routine: abrupt turns, sudden syntheses, surprising conjunctions, bold poetic flights, and memorable turns of phrase.

Yet the central principle of *On Christian Teaching*—that one must always interpret Scripture in terms of the twofold love of God and neighbor—does elucidate the core of Augustine's practice. In the day-to-day routine he hoped that the love uncovered from within the biblical text did more than evoke fervor from hearers. That love required action. As he insisted to one noisy audience: "I say something. And you praise it and applaud and love what I say. Back comes the response—not from me, but from wisdom: 'I want it lived, not voiced. Praise wisdom in living it out—not by making noise but by harmonizing yourself with it.' "[144] Augustine knew it was easier to win applause than to form a community that lived in harmony with God's wisdom. He also knew his natural temptation

[142] *doctr. chr.* 2.6.8 (CCL 32:36); author's translation, *AOW*, 174.

[143] On the limits of using *doctr. chr.* as exemplary of Augustine's principles and practices see Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 239, 248–49.

[144] *s.* 311.4 (PL 38:1415); author's translation.

was to glory in the applause. In sober moments it left him with a divided heart. Once, on the occasion of the anniversary of his ordination, he shared his anxieties with his people:

> It would be dangerous for me to pay attention to the way you praise me and shut my eyes to the way you live. . . . I do not want praise from those who live evil lives. That I abhor, that I detest. It causes me pain, not pleasure. But, if I were to say that I do not wish to be praised by those who live well, I would be lying. Yet if I were to say that I want it, I fear that I might be craving something more hollow than solid. What then should I say? I neither fully wish to have it nor be without it. I do not fully want it—that people's praise might place me in danger. I do not altogether want to be without it—lest it be unrewarding to those I preach to.[145]

Augustine felt the stark clash between the applause he received and Scripture's demanding wisdom. He knew that the same people who came to church on the great feasts later filled the bawdy theaters and bloody arenas;[146] that many used the feasts of martyrs as an excuse to get drunk;[147] that his congregation daily brought their legal squabbles before his courtroom;[148] that upper-class men kept mistresses, as he once had, and were annoyed whenever he preached against it;[149] that the rich were greedy, always ready to wrest away property from poor neighbors just to get a little more light into their already sprawling villas;[150] that certain catechumens delayed, more fearful of future sins than present ones, and said to themselves, "Let me live the way I want a little longer."[151] Augustine knew that the weight of habit too often overwhelmed desire for conversion: "those who say, 'I intend to start a

[145] *s.* 339.1 (= *s. Frangip.* 2; MA 1:190 / PL 38:1480); author's translation.
[146] *s.* 301A.8 (= *s. Denis* 17; MA 1:88–89). Cf. *en. ps.* 39.10.
[147] *ep.* 29 (CCL 31:98–105).
[148] Possidius of Calama, *Vita* 19 (Geerlings, 64); *en. Ps.* 25.2.13-14 (CSEL 93.1B:88–92).
[149] *s.* 224.3 (PL 38:1094–95).
[150] *s.* 50.7 (CCL 41:628–29).
[151] *s.* 97A.3 (= *s. Casin*. II, 114; MA 1:417). Cf. *s.* 16A.6 (= *s. Denis* 20).

new life tomorrow,' . . . when tomorrow comes, you will say the same again."[152]

Such ingrained habits deeply troubled him. He thus turned to Scripture itself to define his role as teacher. He compared himself to Ezekiel, "sentinel for the house of Israel"; he, like Ezekiel, was compelled to preach judgment as well as mercy, repentance as well as joy. It went against the grain of his temperament: "To preach, to rebuke, to correct, to build up, to feel responsible for every one of you—it's a terrible burden, a huge weight, an enormous task."[153] The biblical message of judgment deeply troubled him: "What am I to do? Can I erase such words? I am afraid that they may erase me. Should I just be silent? I am afraid to be silent. They force me to preach. I instill fear because I am afraid. Be afraid *with me* so you may rejoice *with me*."[154] Note the repeated "with me." He wanted companions, but like St. Paul, his model, he sought a companionship that was "in Christ": "Why do I preach? Why do I sit up here? What do I live for? This is my sole purpose: that together we may live with Christ! This is my passion, this is my honor, this is my fame, this is my only possession, this is my joy! . . . But I do not want to be saved without you!"[155]

Scripture was the standard he set before catechumens and baptized alike; but it was a standard he first set before himself: "When I exhort you, I first peer into myself. For one is a hollow preacher of God's word on the outside if one is not first a hearer on the inside."[156] Augustine practiced what he preached. Before preaching, he prayed, as he noted in *On Christian Teaching*: "In praying for himself and for those he is about to address, the preacher should be a person of prayer before he is a speaker of words. As the hour when he is to speak approaches, before he uses his tongue, he

[152] *s.* 339.8 (= *s. Frangip.* 2; MA 1:199); author's translation.
[153] *s.* 339.4 (= *s. Frangip.* 2; MA 1:193); author's translation.
[154] *s.* 339.8 (= *s. Frangip.* 2; MA 1:199); author's translation.
[155] *s.* 17.2 (CCL 41:238); author's translation.
[156] *s.* 179.1 (PL 38:966); author's translation.

should raise his parched soul to God that he may gush forth what he has drunk in and pour out what has filled him up."[157]

CONVERSI AD DOMINUM: THE DISMISSAL

Augustine prepared his sermons by praying; he also ended them by praying, in this case, aloud. The formula he used was so commonplace that the *notarii* usually recorded only its opening words: "Turning to the Lord . . . (*Conversi ad dominum* . . .)."[158] Augustine would then have recited a brief prayer. Various versions are preserved among the manuscripts. One common one was florid and stately:

> Turning to the Lord God, Father Almighty, let us, with a pure heart—as best our weakness can—give him our deepest and richest thanks; praying with all our being to his extraordinary gentleness: that by his good pleasure he would deign to hear our prayers favorably; that by his power he would drive the enemy from our deeds and thoughts; that he would increase our faith, steer our minds, grant us spirit-filled reflections, and carry us over into his blessedness, through his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.[159]

This *Conversi* prayer raises two liturgical questions, both of relevance to Augustine's catechumenate. First, what was this prayer's

[157] *doctr. chr.* 4.15.32 (CCL 32:138); author's translation, *AOW*, 126.

[158] *s.* 15A.9 (= *s. Denis* 21), 16A.13 (= *s. Denis* 20), 16B.4 (= *s. Mai* 17), 18.5, 23A.4 (= *s. Mai* 16), 26.15, etc. On this prayer see François Dolbeau, "L'oraison 'Conversi ad Dominum': Un bilan provisoire des recensions existantes," 127–51 in *Augustin et la prédication en Afriques: Recherches sur divers sermons authentiques, apocryphes ou anonymes*, CEASA 179 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2005); Harmless, "Voice and the Word," 28–31.

[159] *en. Ps.* 150.8 (CCL 40:2196); author's translation. This same prayer appears in certain manuscript traditions appended to *s.* 67.10. Recent critical editions question its placement at *en. Ps.* 150 (CSEL 95.5:304) and *s.* 67. There are seven other versions, including two new ones found among the *Dolbeau* sermons. One of those reads: "Turning to the Lord, let us pray. May he look upon us and perfect us by his saving word, and grant us to rejoice in accord with him and live in accord with him. May he put away from us 'the prudence of the flesh' (Rom 8:6); may he throw down the enemy under our feet, not by our efforts, but by his holy name, in which we have been cleansed through Jesus Christ our Lord."

place within the liturgy? Liturgists have suggested four possibilities: (i) it was a prayer marking the end of the sermon; (ii) it was a blessing situated between the sermon and the dismissal of the catechumens; (iii) it was the priestly formula that introduced the Prayers of the Faithful; or (iv) it was an embryonic version of those prayers. Until recently liturgists thought that the third option was the right one. However, in light of newly discovered sermons, François Dolbeau has demonstrated that it was the first. Two of the *Dolbeau* sermons were delivered at the very same service, and both end with a *Conversi* prayer. It simply makes no sense that within the same liturgy there would have been two dismissals of catechumens and two Prayers of the Faithful. This, therefore, eliminates options ii–iv. The *Conversi* prayer was simply Augustine's way of bringing his sermon to a close.

Second, when Augustine would say "Let us turn to the Lord . . ." did the congregation actually physically turn around? We know that early Christians, at least in private, prayed toward the east, toward the rising sun. But did that carry over to the liturgy? It should also be noted that the entrance and façade of many North African churches, including Augustine's, faced (more or less) east. So did Augustine's congregation, on the command to "turn to the Lord," actually turn its back on him and face east? Given recent discoveries, that indeed seems to be the case. At the end of *Sermon Dolbeau* 19, Augustine cites a verse from Psalm 85, "Be converted to me," then remarks: "The Scriptures are full of 'Be converted to me, turn to me.' The illness, you see, is beginning to produce movement. No, it isn't just saying that you, who were looking toward the west, should now look to the east—that's easily done. If only you also did it inwardly, because that is not easily done! You turn your body around from one point of the compass to another; turn your heart around from one love to another."[160]

Here Augustine anticipates that the congregation would, in just a few moments, turn around from west to east. His point, of course, was that it is easier to make liturgical gestures that signify

[160] *s.* 130A.12 (= *s. Dolbeau* 19; *Vingt-six*, 164); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:126.

conversion than it is to actually convert in terms of one's heart and life. Turning east would have affected the catechumens in his congregation. It is possible that the end of the prayer signaled their dismissal and they would simply have marched out the door. It is also possible that the catechumens may have turned back to the west, back to Augustine, and lined up to receive an individual blessing. We know penitents did so: they lined up and, one by one, came forward to have Augustine lay hands on them.[161] We know that catechumens, at least on certain occasions, received a so-called "sacrament of salt." It is possible that before their dismissal they did so.[162]

Whatever the exact gestures and sequence, the catechumens were dismissed.[163] The liturgy they attended would have lasted around an hour and a half. During it they heard—or more precisely, heard, sang, cheered, prayed—God's word. As Augustine insisted, through all this, through this chorus of voices—the reader, cantor, preacher, the assembly itself—"God is not silent; all these voices are God's voice, resounding all round the world."[164] Once the catechumens left, the doors would be closed. They would not be allowed to witness the mysteries that followed, not until they had passed through the waters of baptism. Nor did they know that sometime later those who remained would "hear a priest of God at the altar exhorting the people of God to pray . . . for catechumens that [God] may inspire them with the desire for rebirth."[165]

[161] Augustine complains about the time it took to dismiss penitents (which took place just before communion): *ep.* 149.6, *s.* 232.7-8.

[162] Council of Carthage III, *Canon* 5 (CCL 149:330).

[163] *s.* 49.8 (CCL 41:640): "After the sermon catechumens are dismissed; the faithful remain." In one of the *Dolbeau* sermons Augustine recounts how he clashed with some in the congregation in Carthage who felt snubbed by his refusal to preach and began chanting rhythmically: "*Missa fac*" ("Do the dismissals") of the catechumens (and others): *Sermo* 359B.6, 20, 23 (= *s. Dolbeau* 2; *Vingt-Six*, 331, 342, 344). On this see Harmless, "Voice and the Word," 27–28; Kennell, "Augustine's Hostile Hearers," 343–52.

[164] *en. Ps.* 93.9 (CCL 39:1312); trans. Boulding, WSA III/18:386. See also *s.* 17.1.

[165] *ep.* 217.2 (CSEL 57:404); trans. Teske, WSA II/4:52.

EXCURSUS: THE DELAY OF BAPTISM?

As we saw in chapter 1, one often-cited problem with the ancient catechumenate was a pattern of delaying baptism. The issue comes to the fore in a recently discovered sermon in which we catch a glimpse of Augustine grappling with a thorny case: What is the status of a catechumen who dies before baptism? This sermon shows that this was no abstract matter of canon law but a burning pastoral issue. The son of a prominent local family had been a catechumen and, unfortunately, died without receiving an emergency baptism. The family was distraught and was apparently using its wealth and social position to pressure the church to give their son a Christian burial. Augustine happened to be passing through town—where precisely is not clear, but he seems to have been on one of his frequent trips between Hippo and Carthage. The local bishop took advantage of Augustine's presence (and prominence) to handle what he knew would be bad news. Augustine opens by reminding his audience of the North African church's long-held tradition: "Still, you all ought to know, dearly beloved, what most of you and in fact almost all of you do know, that according to the Church's custom and discipline the bodies of catechumens who have died ought not to be buried among the bodies of the faithful—there where the sacraments of the faithful are celebrated—and that such a concession should not be granted to anyone."[166] Augustine knew that the wealthy sometimes wiggled around the rules and got their way. So he did not mince words: "Why should such a concession be made to a wealthier person and not to a poor

[166] *s.* 142.1, Appendix (= *s. Dolbeau* 7; *Vingt-six*, 294); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:131. In the anguish of the situation it is easy to overlook the technical canonical question at issue. Augustine says that bodies of catechumens cannot be buried where the bodies of the faithful are buried because that is "where the sacraments of the faithful are celebrated." He repeats the point a little later: "It is because of the sacraments that bodies cannot be laid to rest where it is not right for them to be laid." Living catechumens were, of course, dismissed before the liturgy of the Eucharist; that dismissal applied, it seems, equally to dead catechumens. The point presumably stems from the ancient sense that the Eucharist is a cosmic event; it takes place not just visibly but invisibly, not just on earth but in heaven.

person?"[167] Neither Augustine nor his audience seriously thought the young man was somehow saved. Here again, Augustine did not mince words: "What should I say, my brothers and sisters? Am I going to play up to human feeling and say that catechumens will be going where the faithful will be going? Are we to charm and soothe human grief such that we clash up against the gospel? We can't do it, my brothers and sisters."[168]

For Augustine and the North African church "the gospel," as they understood it, required baptism, without which there could be no salvation.[169] Augustine knew he was dispensing tough medicine. There are moments in this sermon when he draws back and softens his stance: "I don't want to say any more, my brothers and sisters. I've frightened you enough, I must be careful not to increase the grief of some of our brothers and sisters, who have been badly shaken by this sad event."[170] Augustine used the occasion to address the catechumens who were present in the congregation. He took the tragedy at hand as an object lesson: "And on this score, I must seriously remind you, brothers and sisters, that none

[167] *s.* 142.1, Appendix (= *s. Dolbeau* 7; *Vingt-six*, 302); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:131.

[168] *s.* 142.2, Appendix (= *s. Dolbeau* 7; *Vingt-six*, 302); author's translation. Cf. *s.* 27.6 in which he cites the death of a good catechumen who dies before baptism as among the mysteries of divine providence.

[169] This view, as we saw, received its classic North African articulation by Cyprian; see J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 100–31. While Augustine adjusted Cyprian's views on various matters, on this issue he did not waver. The necessity of baptism figures prominently in Augustine's later and lengthy debate with Pelagius and those from his circle (Caelestius, Julian of Eclanum). In that debate Augustine presupposes baptism as an absolute necessity for salvation. The key text for Augustine is John 3:5: "Unless you are born again of water and the Spirit you will not see the kingdom of God." This text is the focus of his plea to catechumens in *Io. eu. tr.* 11 (see the discussion in the next chapter). On the issue of unbaptized catechumens see Georges Bavaud, "La situation du catéchumène par rapport au Royaume des cieux," *Traités Anti-Donatistes*, BA 29 (1964), 610–11.

[170] *s.* 142.3, Appendix (= *s. Dolbeau* 7; *Vingt-six*, 303); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:132).

of you should take it for granted that you are going to be alive tomorrow. Run quickly to grace, change your habits; may this sad event even serve you as a salutary warning."[171] He begged the catechumens to put aside all fears, assuring them that Christ's "yoke is smooth" and his "burden is light." Such admonitions were routine, as we saw. He regularly encouraged catechumens to repent, to "run to baptism."[172]

An older scholarship routinely cited such passages to support the claim that the fourth- and fifth-century catechumenate was weighed down by large masses of catechumens delaying their baptism. That is the way Dolbeau himself interpreted this sermon upon its discovery: "In a society where many of the catechumens indefinitely delayed their inscription for baptism, cases [such as this one] must have produced themselves frequently."[173] Victor Saxer once went so far as to claim that "one can quite rightly say that admission to the catechumenate is only to be considered, most often, as an option to receive baptism on one's deathbed."[174]

Éric Rebillard has argued strongly against such an interpretation, insisting that "one must always begin by looking at in what context Augustine calls [catechumens] to get baptized without delay before one concludes that he is denouncing each time a form of the delay of baptism."[175] Once one restores passages to their original context, a variety of motives surface. Sometimes appeals were sparked by the liturgical timetable. Augustine routinely made such appeals on the eve of and throughout the season of Lent, again

[171] *s.* 142.2, Appendix (= *s. Dolbeau* 7; *Vingt-six*, 302); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:131).

[172] E.g., *Io. eu. tr.* 10.9, 11.1-13; *en. Ps.* 80.8; *s.* 131.1.

[173] Dolbeau, *Vingt-six*, 291, relying on Frederik van der Meer, *Saint Augustin, pasteur d'âmes*, 2 vols., trans. E. Vaile, et al. (Colmar: Éditions Alsatia, 1959), 2:241–46.

[174] Victor Saxer, *Les rites de l'initiation chrétienne du IIe au VIe siècle: esquisse historique et signification d'après leurs principaux témoins* (Spoleto: [Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo], 1988), 424.

[175] Rebillard, "La figure du catéchumène et le problème du délai du baptême dans la pastorale d'Augustin: à propos du post-tractatum Dolbeau 7: *De sepultura catechenorum*," 285–92 in *Augustin prédicateur*, at 287.

and again calling catechumens to apply for baptism.[176] Sometimes it was the biblical reading of the day that provoked the call. We saw this earlier in his sermons on John 6 and on the Red Sea. It is evident in another of the Dolbeau sermons in which Augustine, preaching on Mark 1:15 ("repent and believe the good news"), uses the text as a springboard to address both catechumens and wayward baptized.[177] Rebillard, after careful sorting through such texts, rejects the stereotype: "Nothing in the preaching of Augustine invites one to imagine crowds of indifferent Christians who were waiting to the hour of their death to be baptized."[178] He notes: "The invitations to hurry up, to not slow up, to run in order to receive baptism that Augustine repeats to catechumens in the time of Lent appear, in effect, rather positive. Augustine's intention is pedagogical. He does not lay the blame on a delay associated with baptism but recalls a fundamental teaching: the necessity for every Christian to be baptized. By definition, the catechumen is not baptized, and for a bishop [every catechumen] is always delaying baptism. The delay of baptism is consequently a question indivisible from the status of catechumens in the church."[179] He concludes: "The delay of baptism is therefore not a pastoral problem for Augustine."[180]

I think that Rebillard is, in the main, correct. Let me give an analogy. We who teach want our students to graduate, and we do all we can to make that happen. Along the way our students have problems, some academic, some personal. An occupational hazard of teachers is complaining about one's students to one's colleagues. Complaints about students do not mean that the whole educational system is in collapse—though selective comments from selective faculty might give that impression. We teachers all have certain students who struggle to graduate. We try to move them

[176] Rebillard cites various pre-Lenten and Lenten sermons: *s.* 132, 335H (= *s. Lambot* 26); *Io. eu. tr.* 10.10, 11.1, 12.3.

[177] *s.* 352A.3-4 (= *s. Dolbeau* 14; *Vingt-six*, 109); trans. Hill, WSA III/11:89.

[178] Rebillard, "La figure du catéchumène," 292 (author's translation.).

[179] Rebillard, "Le figure du catéchumène," 289 (author's translation.).

[180] Rebillard, "Le figure du catéchumène," 292 (author's translation.).

on as best we can by a combination of compassion, tutoring, and cajoling. I think something like this is at work in the complaints of Augustine and his fourth-century colleagues. Did he and they have catechumens who delayed? Yes. Did he and they have some newsworthy cases of those who delayed until their deathbed? Yes. Was it a massive problem? I don't think so. Did his and their complaints about delay signal that the catechumenate was in systemic crisis? I don't think so. The ancient catechumenate, not unlike the modern university, was an institution asked to achieve miracles: the thoroughgoing transformation of a huge mass of people. And, like the modern university, it worked reasonably well. That does not mean there were not lots of problems along the way. Augustine wanted to move his catechumens along, and he did so using various rhetorical methods and was prompted to do so for various reasons—pastoral, liturgical, and scriptural. Rebillard is right, I believe, to debunk the scholarly stereotype of masses of indifferent catechumens who await deathbed baptisms.

Chart 4

Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens

Sermon (or Letter)	Latin Text	Translation	Scripture / Occasion
1. Cross on the Forehead			
Sermon 32 (✝)	CCL 41: 398–411	WSA III/2: 137–50	Psalm 143
Sermon 97A = s. Casin. 2.114-115	MA 1: 416–18	WSA III/4: 40–42	Luke 5:31-32
Sermon 107 (✝)	PL 38: 627–32	WSA III/4: 110–16	Luke 13:13-21
Sermon 301A = s. Denis 17	MA 1: 81–89	WSA III/8: 290–98	Luke 14:28-33
Sermon 302 (= s. Guelf 25)	PL 38: 1385–95	WSA III/8: 300–11	Feast: St. Lawrence
Exposition of Psalm 68, s. 1 (✝)	CCL 39: 900–16	WSA III/17: 364–82	Psalm 68
Exposition of Psalm 141 (✝)	CSEL 95.5: 36	WSA III/20: 327–43	Psalm 141

Chart 4—Cont'd

Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens

Sermon (or Letter)	Latin Text	Translation	Scripture / Occasion
Tractate on Gospel of John 3 (+)	CCL 36: 20–31	WSA III/12: 68–85	John 1:15-18
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	CCL 36: 109–20	WSA III/12: 210–27	John 2:22–3:5
Tractate on Gospel of John 53 (+)	CCL 36: 452–58	FOTC 88: 290–300	John 12:37-43
2. Catechumens' Ignorance of "Secrets"			
Sermon 131	PL 38: 729–34	WSA III/4: 316–24	John 6:54-56
Sermon 132	PL 38: 734–42	WSA III/4: 325–28	John 6:56-57
Sermon 198 = s. Dolbeau 26	*Vingt-Six*, 366–417	WSA III/11: 180–237	January 1
Sermon 232	SC 116: 206–78	WSA III/7: 24–29	Luke 24:13-35
Sermon 235	RB 67 (1957): 137–40	WSA III/7: 40–42	Luke 24:13-55
Sermon 307	PL 38: 1406–7	WSA III/9: 47–49	Feast: John the Baptist
Sermon 374 = s. Dolbeau 23	*Vingt-six, 593–59*	WSA III/11: 392–410	Epiphany
Exposition of Psalm 80	CCL 39: 1119–35	WSA III/18: 152–71	Psalm 80
Exposition of Psalm 109	CCL 40: 1601–20	WSA III/19: 261–84	Psalm 109
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	CCL 36: 109–20	WSA III/12: 210–27	John 2:22–3:5
Letter 140	CSEL 44: 155–234	WSA II/2: 242–89	to Honoratus
3. Catechumens as Examples to Illustrate a Point			
Sermon 16A = s. Denis 20	CCL 41: 218–29	WSA III/1: 347–58	Ps 38:13
Sermon 27 (+)	CCL 41: 361–66	WSA III/2: 104–8	Psalm 96
Sermon 142 = s. Dolbeau 7	*Vingt-six, 294–95*	WSA III/11: 131–33	Burial of catechumen
Sermon 232	SC 116: 206–78	WSA III/7: 24–29	Luke 24:13-35
Sermon 352A = s. Dolbeau 14	*Vingt-six*, 107–14	WSA III/11: 87–93	Mark 1:15

Chart 4—Cont'd

Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens

Sermon (or Letter)	Latin Text	Translation	Scripture / Occasion
Exposition of Psalm 41	CCL 38: 459–74	WSA III/16: 239–55	Psalm 41
Tractate on Gospel of John 4	CCL 36: 31–40	WSA III/12: 86–100	John 1:19-23
Tractate on Gospel of John 5 (†)	CCL 36: 40–53	WSA III/12: 101–20	John 1:33
Tractate on Gospel of John 13	CCL 36: 129–41	WSA III/12: 242–59	John 3:22-29
Tractate on Gospel of John 44	CCL 36: 381–88	FOTC 88: 175–86	John 9:1-41
4. Admonitions to Seek Baptism			
Sermon 97A = s. Casin. 2.114-115	MA 1: 416–18	WSA III/4: 40–42	Luke 5:31-32
Sermon 132	PL 38: 734–42	WSA III/4: 325–28	John 6:56
Sermon 135	PL 38: 746–50	WSA III/4: 346–51	John 9:1-41
Sermon 136B = s. Lambot 10	MA 1: 377–79	WSA III/4: 363–66	Jn 9:1-41
Sermon 142 = s. Dolbeau 7	*Vingt-six, 294–95*	WSA III/11: 131–33	Burial of catechumen
Sermon 198 = s. Dolbeau 26	*Vingt-six*, 366–417	WSA III/11: 180–237	Jan. 1 - against the pagans
Sermon 260C = s. Mai 94	MA 1: 333–39	WSA III/7: 194–99	Octave of Easter
Sermon 352A = s. Dolbeau 14	*Vingt-six*, 107–14	WSA III/11: 87–93	Mk 1:15
Sermon 374 = s. Dolbeau 23	*Vingt-six, 593–59*	WSA III/11: 392–410	Epiphany
Sermon 392	PL 39: 1710–13	WSA III/10: 421–24	to married couples
Exposition of Psalm 41	CCL 38: 459–74	WSA III/16: 239–55	Ps 41
Exposition of Psalm 80	CCL 39: 1119–35	WSA III/18: 152–71	Ps 80
Exposition of Psalm 109	CCL 40: 1601–20	WSA III/19: 261–84	Ps 109
Tractate on Gospel of John 1 (†)	CCL 36: 1–11	WSA III/12: 39–54	Jn 1:1-5

Chart 4—Cont'd

Sermons (and Letters) Addressed to Catechumens

Sermon (or Letter)	Latin Text	Translation	Scripture / Occasion
Tractate on Gospel of John 4	CCL 36: 31–40	WSA III/12: 86–100	Jn 1:19-23
Tractate on Gospel of John 10	CCL 36: 100–09	WSA III/12: 197–209	Jn 2:12-21
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	CCL 36: 109–20	WSA III/12: 210–27	Jn 2:12-3:5
Tractate on Gospel of John 12	CCL 36: 120–29	WSA III/12: 228–41	Jn 3:6-21
Tractate on Gospel of John 44	CCL 36: 381–88	FOTC 88: 175–86	Jn 9:1-41
Letter 151	CSEL 44: 235–46	WSA II/2: 380–87	to Caecilian
Letter 140	CSEL 44: 155–234	WSA II/2: 242–89	to Honoratus
Letter 258	CSEL 57: 605–10	WSA II/4: 194–96	to Martianus
Letter 2 (Divjak)	CSEL 88: 9–21	WSA II/4: 232–40	to Firmus

✢ : Reference to catechumens implied.

Chart 5

Other References to Catechumens & the Catechumenate

Sermon / Treatise	Text	Translation	Topic
Exposition of Psalm 36.2.4	CCL 38: 350	WSA III/16: 106–7	Cross on emperors' foreheads
Exposition of Psalm 41.1	CCL 38: 459–60	WSA III/16: 239–40	Psalm 41 as theme song of catechumens
Exposition of Psalm 103.1.14	CCL 39: 1487	WSA III/19: 124	*Disciplina arcani: baptism and Eucharist*
Sermon 19.6	CCL 41: 258	WSA III/1: 383	Catechumens during earthquake
Sermon 46.31	CCL 41: 557–58	WSA III/2: 284	Catechumens as Christians
Sermon 49.8	CCL 41: 620	WSA III/2: 338	Dismissal of catechumens
Sermon 65A.7 = s. Etaix 1	RB 86 (1976): 44–45	WSA III/3: 202	Catechumens as part of church
Sermon 181.7	PL 38:979–84	WSA III/5: 324–30	Lord's Prayer not a prayer for catechumens
Sermon 212.2	SC 116 (2003): 184	WSA III/6: 138	Creed sums up Scriptures heard during catechumenate
Sermon 218C.4 = s. Guelf. 3	MA 1: 454	WSA III/6: 196	Cross on forehead
Sermon 229 = s. Denis 6	MA 1: 29–32	WSA III/6: 265–67	Catechumenate as "observation"
Sermon 260C.1 = s. Mai 94	MA 1:3 34	WSA III/7: 194–95	Entrance rites as "conception" in womb
Sermon 359B.6 = s. Dolbeau 2	*Vingt-six, 331*	WSA III/11: 335	Crowd calls for dismissal of catechumens
Sermon to People of Caesarea 8	BA 32: 443	----	Petilian of Constantine as ex-catholic catechumen
Tractate on Gospel of John 96.3	CCL 36: 571	FOTC 90: 197	Rationale for *disciplina arcani*
Commentary on Galatians 35	CSEL 84: 103	Plumer, OECS, 189	Catechumens who observe Jewish sabbath

Chart 5—Cont'd

Other References to Catechumens & the Catechumenate

Sermon / Treatise	Text	Translation	Topic
Confessions 1.11.17	CCL 27: 9	WSA I/1: 50	Augustine made catechumen: Cross on forehead & salt
Confessions 2.3.6	CCL 27: 20	WSA I/1: 65	Augustine's father as catechumen
Confessions 5.14.25	CCL 27: 72	WSA I/1: 133	Augustine returns to status as catechumen
Confessions 6.4.5	CCL 27: 77	WSA I/1: 139	Augustine had become catechumen as infant
Confessions 9.4.8	CCL 27: 137	WSA I/1: 214–15	Augustine as catechumen prays Psalms
On Adulterous Marriages 1.26.33	PL 40: 469–70	WSA I/9: 163	Emergency baptism of unconscious catechumens
On Adulterous Marriages 2.16.16	PL 40: 482	WSA I/9: 179	Divorced catechumens
On Catechizing Beginners 20.34	CCL 46: 158	Canning, 135	Cross on forehead prefigured in Exodus
On Catechizing Beginners 26.50	CCL 46: 173	Canning, 173	Entrance rites into catechumenate
On Eight Questions to Dulc. 7.3	CCL 44A: 289	WSA I/12: 264	Story of catechumen named Celticchius
On Faith and Works 6.9	CSEL 41: 45	WSA I/8: 233	Catechumens: Title & status as "hearers"
On Faith and Works 7.11	CSEL 41: 48	WSA I/8: 234	Both doctrine & morals in sermons to catechumens
On Holy Virginity 48.48	PL 40: 425	WSA I/9: 240	Lord's Prayer for baptized, not catechumens
On Merits & Forgiveness 2.26.42	CSEL 60: 113–14	WSA I/23: 107–8	Sacrament of catechumens (salt?)
Revisions, prol. 3	CCL 57: 6	WSA I/2: 22–23	Augustine's writings while a catechumen

CHAPTER 5

Catechumenate: The Eagle and the Staircase

In Augustine's time the bishop had the right to choose the lections during certain periods of the liturgical year. Augustine used this freedom to guide people through certain favorite biblical books, or parts of them, on a continuous reading (*lectio continua*) basis.[1] Beginning in December, probably in the year 406, he embarked on a special series that intertwined sermons on John with others on the Psalms.[2] Over the next four months he preached on these two books at a pace of two to three sermons per week (with a month break somewhere in the middle).[3] During this same period

[1] *Io. eu. tr.* 2.1 (CCL 36:11-12). See Michael Margoni-Kögler, "Lectio," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2010): 914–22.

[2] On the *Tractates on the Gospel of John* (*Io. eu. tr.*) see Marie-François Berrouard, *Introduction aux Homélies de saint Augustin sur l'Évangile de saint Jean*, CEASA 170 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2004); also Douglas Milewski, "Augustine's 124 Tractates on the Gospel of John: The *Status Quaestionis* and the State of Neglect," *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002): 61–77; H. A. G. Houghton, *Augustine's Text of John: Patristic Citations and Latin Gospel Manuscripts*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Hildegund Müller, "Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV (In-)," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2004–2010): 704–30. On the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (*en. Ps.*), see Michael Fiedrowicz, *Psalmus vox totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins* Enarrationes in Psalmos (Freiburg: Herder, 1997); idem, "General Introduction," 13–66 in *Expositions of the Psalms (1–32)*, WSA III/15 (2000); Hildegund Müller and Michael Fiedrowicz, "Enarrationes in Psalmos," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 804–58.

[3] See chart 6. On the (rather speculative) dates of individual sermons see Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1965), 46–53; Suzanne Poque, "Trois semaines de prédication à Hippone en février-mars 407," *Recherches augustiniennes* 7 (1971): 169–87, at 183–87.

he apparently preached on other texts, for he refers to giving a "rain of daily exhortations."[4] His audience included the usual mix: merchants and beggars; married and ascetics; freeborn and slaves; baptized and, of course, the catechumens.[5] For the next several months the Psalms and John were Augustine's curriculum for his assembly and thus for his catechumenate. Catechumens received his direct attention from time to time, and that attention increased as the series progressed and drew nearer to Lent. Augustine mentioned the catechumens by name six times in the series; there are, as well, a number of other implied references to them. Most often what Augustine said, he said to all, and the catechumens were numbered among that all. Throughout, the care he took for those who "walked a little slower" is evident—and the catechumens would be among those who walked a little slower.

John's gospel and the Psalms were two of Augustine's favorites. Over the course of his life he commented on the whole of both. He loved John's gospel for its sublimity. As he once told his congregation: "The evangelist John, like an eagle, flies higher than the others, soaring above the foggy atmosphere of the earth and gazing with steadfast eyes upon the light of Truth."[6] What John gazed on was Christ the Word, at once the divine Word (John 1:1) and the Word-made-Flesh (John 1:14), and the unfathomable paradox of this captivated Augustine. Where the Synoptic Gospels focused on Jesus' concrete words and deeds, John's gospel probed their inner meanings. This appealed to Augustine's taste, for he was fascinated less by history's facts and more by its deeper rhythms and undercurrents.

In this four-month series Augustine worked his way through the first three chapters of John: i.e., the lofty Prologue, the baptism of Jesus, the encounter with Nicodemus. These episodes led Augustine to explore facets of the mystery of Christ: his divinity and humanity, his role in creating the world and re-creating hu-

[4] *Io. eu. tr.* 3.1 (CCL 36:20); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:68. See also 12.14.

[5] Berrouard, "L'auditoire," *Introduction aux Homélies*, 27–38.

[6] *Io. eu. tr.* 15.1 (CCL 36:150); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:275. See also *Io. eu. tr.* 19.5, 36.1, 40.1.

mankind. Throughout, Augustine challenged various opponents—Manichees, Arians, Donatists—and waged what Marie-François Berrouard has called "a combat for the honor of Christ."[7] Along the way Augustine gave the catechumens (among others) a basic understanding of key facets of Christian doctrine, and his frequent comments on baptism—its meaning, its responsibilities, its joys—did much to prepare the catechumens for the weighty step that lay before them. His polemics against various opponents sharpened the catechumens' sense of catholic identity and gave them tools to defend themselves against the polemics of outsiders they met daily in the streets.

The Psalms were equally dear to Augustine's heart. At his baptism the "lovely harmonies of your singing Church" had left him in tears.[8] This music continued to cast a spell over him: "I am aware that our minds are more deeply moved to devotion by those holy words when they are sung, and more ardently inflamed to piety than would be the case without singing."[9] The language of the Psalms became part of the air he breathed. Almost every page of *Confessions* quotes or echoes verses from the Psalms. Not surprisingly, he worked to pass on this spirituality to catechumens and to others. As he told one correspondent, he used psalm singing to fill in transitions within the liturgy: "What time is not right for singing holy songs—except during the readings or the homily or when the priest prays aloud or when the voice of the deacon calls for common prayer? But at other periods of time I absolutely do not see what Christians gathered together could do that would be better, or more useful, or more holy."[10] His efforts met with only mixed success. Many in the North African Church remained lackadaisical when it came to singing.[11] Yet Augustine did not simply want passionate singers; he wanted thoughtful ones. After all, he

[7] Berrouard, "Un combat pour l'honneur du Christ: La controverse antidonatiste des *Tractatus*," *Introduction aux Homélies*, 55–78.

[8] *conf.* 9.6.14 (CCL 27:141); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:220.

[9] *conf.* 10.33.49 (CCL 27:181); trans. Boulding, WSA I/1:269.

[10] *ep.* 55.18.34-19.35 (CCL 31:263); trans. Teske, WSA II/1:234.

[11] *ep.* 55.18.34 (CCL 31:262).

insisted, human beings must not be not like "blackbirds and parrots and crows and magpies" who "give voice to words they do not understand."[12] As he saw it, the Psalms touched the "inward ear." They drew one to an "inner place of sanctity"; there a "seductive loneliness" took hold as though as one were drawn to "someone softly strumming an instrument."[13] Augustine insisted that the voice of the Psalmist was at the same time the passionate voice of Christ—by turns, the voice of the Risen Lord and the voice of his Body, the church on earth: "It is his voice in all the Psalms: now strumming gently, now moaning, now rejoicing in hope for what will be, now sighing about things as they are."[14] Augustine, a man who loved to probe his own powerful feelings, was drawn to the Psalms' vast reservoir of human emotion. By tapping into their depths Augustine would give the catechumens a sounding board to explore their own affectivity and would pass on to them a repertoire of religious emotions he considered vital to Christian life.

In this four-month series Augustine focused on the Psalms of Ascent (Pss 119–133 in the old Latin numbering), those songs pilgrims had once sung on their way up to the temple in Jerusalem. As he saw it, the title affixed to these Psalms determined their meaning: that each was a "song of steps" (*canticum graduum*); that while on staircases one can either go up or down, on the Psalms' staircase he and they were to act "as people resolved to go up."[15] He cited Psalm 83:6 as his optic for interpreting them: that God had "set steps of ascent in the heart." This meant that the journey upward to God was at the same time a journey inward through the heart. These psalms, he argued, would lead him and his fellow pilgrims, both catechumens and faithful, to explore the heart's depths

[12] *en. Ps.* 18.2.1 (CSEL 93.1B:33); trans. Boulding, WSA III/15:204. See also *Io. eu. tr.*13.3.

[13] *en. Ps.* 41.9 (CCL 38:466–67); author's translation.

[14] *en. Ps.* 42.1 (CCL 38:474); author's translation. On the evolution of Augustine's reading of the Psalms as the voice of Christ, see Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 165–212.

[15] *en. Ps.* 119.1 (CSEL 95.3:37); author's translation.

and gain a foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem. These psalms offered both a map for the catechumens' and faithful's journey to God and a spirituality for their sojourn. It would be a journey into the ineffable:

> Think of those who sing at harvest or in vineyards or at some other rugged work, the way they express their rapture by beginning with songs set to words, and then, as if bursting with a joy so full that they cannot give vent to it in set syllables, they drop the words and break into this improvised melody of pure jubilation. This is the sound of pure joy. It signals the heart bringing to birth what cannot be spoken. And to whom does that jubilation rightly ascend, if not to God who is ineffable? Truly God is ineffable. You cannot give voice to Him in words. And if you cannot give voice to Him in words—and you ought not stay silent—what else can you do but break into jubilation? In this way the heart rejoices without words, and the boundless expanse of rapture is not bound in by set syllables.[16]

It was this passion that Augustine wanted his catechumens to taste.

TWO SESSIONS: DECEMBER 406

To appreciate the pedagogy of Augustine's catechumenate we need to get a taste for individual sessions, their flow and dynamics. I focus here on two sermons from this sequence: *Tractate* 1 on John 1:1-5 and *Exposition of Psalm 121*. In the first, Augustine used the gospel text to explore the meaning and import of Christ's divinity. In the second, he used the psalm text to explore the feelings that ought to guide one's pilgrimage to the City of God. These two sermons, the third and fourth in the overall sequence, were given in early December, apparently within a few days of one another. In treating these I put the camera into motion, so to speak, tracing step by step the language he used, the themes he touched

[16] *en. Ps.* 32.2.8 (CSEL 93.1B:270); author's translation, *AOW*, 199–200. For Augustine's views on ineffability see Paul van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as a Negative Theologian* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011); also Franz Karl Prassl, "Iubilatio (iubilare)," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2004–2010): 776–79.

on, and the moods he evoked. This allows us to view at closer range important ways Augustine used Scripture to catechize the catechumens.

TRACTATE ON JOHN 1

In the *exordium* rhetoricians traditionally proclaimed their poor ability for speaking on the issue at hand. This was, of course, mere posturing. Here Augustine seems to echo the convention: "I am very much at a loss how, even with the Lord's largesse, I may say or explain in my small measure what has been read from the gospel." Despite the convention, Augustine was not posturing. On this day he found himself having to speak on John's prologue, a text that had inspired some of his own and his contemporaries' most subtle theological thinking. He had his audience very much in view: "Among you, my beloved people, there are many who think only in human ways and who are not yet able to raise themselves to a spiritual understanding."[17] He seems to have had in mind the uninitiated, especially catechumens. Despite his ambivalence, he insisted he had no wish to cheat any who might profit from his words.

First, he quoted a verse from Psalm 120, which he had preached on a few days earlier: "I have lifted my eyes to the mountains, from which help shall come to me." The evangelist "John [was] one of those mountains" to which Augustine wished to lift the eyes of his hearers. He shifted to the moderate style, giving a brief encomium on John the evangelist as "the mountain": "The mountain . . . was contemplating the divinity of the Word. What was this mountain like? How high was it? It had soared above all the peaks of the earth, soared beyond all the plains of the air, soared beyond the dizzy heights of the stars, soared beyond all the choirs and legions of angels."[18] Augustine, playing on a Neoplatonist motif, presumed that John had ascended to the divine by passing from the visible to the invisible, from the created to the uncreated. He wanted his hearers to make a similar ascent, to follow the path of John the mountain. So before speaking of God the Word,

[17] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.1 (CCL 36:1); author's translation.
[18] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.5 (CCL 36:2–3); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:42.

Augustine first sketched out the scope of what the Word had created—the things of earth, the earth itself, the whole visible universe—and insisted that the Word simply spoke and it was created.

Augustine then paused—apparently wary of embarking on any exploration of the mystery of the life of the Trinity. First, he called people to imitate John, who, at the Last Supper, had "laid his head on the Lord's breast." According to Augustine this meant that John "drank in from the Lord's breast what he would give us to drink." The image is maternal, as if the apostle had nursed at the breast of the Word.[19] Augustine then exhorted the catechumens and baptized to imitate John: "John . . . gave us words to drink; then, you have to grasp their meaning from the same source that he who gave them to you drank from. Lift up your eyes then to the mountains from where help is coming to you so that you may receive a chalice from there, that is, so that you may accept the word given for you to drink."[20]

Augustine embarked then on a discussion of the divinity of the Word. In doing so he passed on key insights that would later appear in his subtle and brilliant *On the Trinity* (*De trinitate*).[21] First, he called attention to the very words he himself spoke, noting that they boomed out, then drifted away into silence. The divine Word too "sounds forth" but, unlike human words, it "does not fade

[19] This maternal imagery is more explicit later: *en. Ps.* 119.2., 130.8-13; cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 1.17, 36.1.

[20] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.7 (CCL 36:4); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:44. See also *Io. eu. tr.* 36.1.

[21] On Augustine's trinitarian theology see especially Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Other essentials include Michel René Barnes, "Re-reading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," 145–76 in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You are Catholic' (*serm.* 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39–82; Basil Studer, *Augustinus: De Trinitate: Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005); Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate, Oxford Theological Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Emmanuel Bermon and Gerard J. P. O'Daly, eds., *Le 'De trinitate' de saint Augustin. Exégèse, logique et noétique: Actes du colloque international de Bordeaux, 16–19 juin 2010*, CEASA 192 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 2012).

away." What is more, in its unceasing sounding forth the Word keeps all creation rolling. With this antithesis Augustine communicated the idea of the Word's never-ending creativity. He then asked his hearers to turn within themselves and note the dynamic, that before they themselves spoke out loud, an inner word first echoed within their hearts. He then explained: "If you can have a word in your heart—a word that is like a plan born in your mind, such that your mind may give birth to a plan—that plan is like the offspring of your mind, like the child of your heart."[22] Note his word choice: The human mind "gives birth" to an inner word. So too, he explained, the Father "begets" an inner Word. Here Augustine linked quite disparate concepts, "word" and "child." He was also (and subtly) laying the groundwork for claiming that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, that the dynamism of human consciousness mirrors in some remote, though analogous, way the dynamics of God's inner life. And, he added, that inner word, whether human or divine, was also a "plan." Augustine then invoked another analogy. He asked hearers to think of themselves as an architect who envisioned a magnificent new building. Until it was built, others would not be able to see into their mind to glimpse the inner blueprint. But once complete, "people notice the admirable building and admire the builder's plan; they are surprised by what they can see and in love with what they do not see. For which of them could see the plan in *your* heart? So, then, if a human plan wins praise because of some striking monument, do you want to see how the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, the Word of God, is the plan of God?"[23]

[22] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.8-9 (CCL 36:4–5); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:46. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 194–95, in analyzing this sermon notes that this is "the first text where Augustine likens the Word of God to the 'inner' word of human beings. The origins of this language have been the subject of much debate. One significant philosophical source for Augustine seems to be the Stoic notion of the *lekton* or the 'sayable,' an incorporeal impression, thought, or proposition in the mind which can be spoken. . . . It is likely that Augustine is also influenced by Plotinus's account of epistemology and the imagination in such texts as *Ennead* 4.3 and 4.4."

[23] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.9 (CCL 36:5–6); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:46.

Augustine then embarked on a panegyric on the brilliant architectural design of the visible universe. He pointed to the magnificent vista and color of the sky, the fertility of the earth, the rhythms of the seasons. He then suddenly digressed and attacked opponents of the Council of Nicaea, those "Arians" who claimed that the Word was not divine in the same way that the Father was.[24] In this polemic he used a stock rhetorical technique, the diatribe. He first offered a mock challenge, acting as though there really were Arians standing in his audience: "Now let some misbelieving Arian or other step forward and say that the Word of God was made."[25] Then he pummeled his imaginary opponent with questions, as if the Arian case were on public trial. In the middle of this digression he made a passing appeal to the catechumens: "But if you were once made through the Word, you still need to be remade by the Word."[26] He then returned to his grand survey of the wonders of creation, "from the angel to the maggot," in hopes that his hearers might peer through this visible magnificence and glimpse the invisible magnificence of the Word's nature.[27]

He then relaxed from this philosophic high-flying to tell a little fable. Augustine was not usually a storyteller. While his sermons teem with images from the life around him—and in that way stayed

[24] Augustine, following the rhetorical practice of pro-Nicenes of his generation, lumped together all opponents of the Nicene Creed as "Arians." See Michel René Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy'*, Oxford Theological Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). On mentions of "Arians" in these sermons see Marie-François Berrouard, "La présence d'Arien à Hippone," BA 73A:485–86; Hildegund Müller, "Movements of a Putrefying Carcass: On Augustine's Use of 'Arians' in *Tractatus in evangelium Iohannis*," *Studia Patristica* 49 (2010): 301–5; Maria Grazia Mara, "Arianni, Arrius," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 450–59.

[25] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.11 (CCL 36:6); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:47.

[26] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.12 (CCL 36:7); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:48. This is an example of those implicit appeals scattered through this series. Augustine refers pointedly to the catechumens in the assembly without singling them out by name.

[27] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.13 (CCL 36:7); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:49.

close to his hearers' experience—only rarely did he tell stories. In this sermon he broke from his usual habits. He told a story about a man who was annoyed by flies. Flies buzzing around one's face were, of course, part of everyday life, given the heat and unsanitary conditions in Roman North Africa. One day a Manichee noticed the man's distress. "Who made them?" the Manichee asked. "The devil," the man admitted. The Manichee then led the man, step by step, to concede that the devil must have made other creatures—bees, locusts, lizards, birds, sheep, elephants, even human beings—until "the poor guy—being fed up with flies—was made into a fly himself, taken possession of by the devil," that is, a servant of Beelzebub, the lord of the flies.[28] This folktale was meant to delight, yet with it Augustine got across a simple point—that all creation, even flies, are God's good gift—and warned his people, both catechumens and faithful, of a snare that had once snared him, Manicheism.

Augustine then returned to the text and noted John 1:3: "through the Word all things were made." This idea lay at the heart of the Christian vision of creation. The phrase appears in the creed of Nicaea and its later variants. It also figured as a central theme in an address on the creed that Augustine once gave at a council of North African bishops.[29] Here he took care to explain it to the catechumens. First, like a good grammarian, he noted how the text should be punctuated (as we saw, ancient codices lacked punctuation) and that incorrect punctuation led to misinterpretation. Then to explain the verse itself Augustine played on yet another analogy: a carpenter making a chest. The carpenter's mental (and thus invisible) design gave "life" to the visible chest. In the same way, God the Word's invisible design gives "life" to the whole visible universe: "You see the earth—the earth is in the Word's artistry (*ars*). You see the sky, the sky is there in his artistry. You can see the sun and moon; these are in his artistry."[30]

[28] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.14 (CCL 36:8); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:50.

[29] *f. et sym.* 4.5 (CSEL 41:8–9). On this see Ayres, "Faith of Our Fathers: *De fide et symbolo*," in idem, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 82–86.

[30] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.17 (CCL 36:10); author's translation. Concerning Augustine's use of *ars* (which I have translated as "artistry"), Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*,

Augustine returned to this analogy in his next sermon on John, where he gave it a paradoxical twist. While a human carpenter works on his handiwork from the outside, God constructs the universe while remaining constantly present within it. Even more paradoxically, God does not *do* something to make it; his very presence both creates and governs the universe.[31] So in *Tractate* 1, Augustine stressed the similarity of the Word's artistry with the carpenter's, and in *Tractate* 2, their dissimilarity. Thus in terms of pedagogy Augustine used analogies both positively (highlighting likenesses) and negatively (highlighting disjunctions). In this case his analogy delineated facets of the Christian doctrine of creation and at the same time communicated his sense of the divine omnipresence.

At the sermon's close Augustine exhorted the assembly to seek the wisdom of the Word, the "life" who is "the light of humankind" (John 1:4), a life and light whose very existence some fail to see. Just as the light of the sun shone on those whose eyes were blind, so the wisdom of the Word shone on those whose hearts were blind. Then, playing off a medical analogy, Augustine begged his hearers to seek the Word's healing: "If a person were not able to see because of sore and dirty eyes, the doctor would say: 'Cleanse from your eye whatever muck is there.' Dust, muck, smoke—sins and iniquities are just like these. Remove them all from the [heart's] eye and you will see the wisdom that is always there—for God is that Wisdom. And as the saying goes, 'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.' "[32]

This presentation offers a glimpse into Augustine's skills. Beneath its array of analogies and insights lay great philosophic sophistication. Certain turns took their cues from Plotinus, but with a difference. "What Plotinus had struggled to convey to a select classroom in Rome," Brown notes, "the Christians of Hippo . . . could hear

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194n80, notes: "The term *ars* refers to the learnt and active knowledge of an artist who creates. As Augustine applies the term to God it also has the connotation of the principle from which all the *artes* stem."

[31] *Io. eu. tr.* 2.10 (CCL 36:16).

[32] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.19 (CCL 36:11); author's translation.

any Sunday in the sermons of Augustine."[33] That is but one side of it. Augustine's concern here was much more than being a philosophical popularist. It went beyond even teaching about certain highly contested threads within the doctrine of the Trinity. Augustine's deeper concern was spirituality, handing on a method of mystical ascent, teaching his catechumens and others a way to lift up their hearts and minds to God, to embark on a journey "through the corporeal . . . to the incorporeal," from creation to the Creator. A few years earlier, in books 7 and 9 of *Confessions*, he sketched his own efforts at just such ascents of soul, and such a contemplative method forms one important thread running through his later masterpiece, *On the Trinity*. Here Augustine took pains to pass on the hard-won lessons from his own spiritual search. Where Plotinus had claimed such mystical ascents were possible because of the very God-like nature of the soul, Augustine the Christian had discovered otherwise. We are and remain creatures. Any ascent to God requires a recognition not only of the vast abyss between creature and Creator; it requires a recognition and admission of our brokenness and sinfulness and the realization that no ascent is possible without the healing and mediation of Christ.[34]

EXPOSITION OF PSALM 121

Augustine opened the sermon by comparing the human heart to a bird: if mired in muddy loves it flapped helplessly like a bird

[33] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 241.

[34] On this ascent of the soul in Augustine see Goulven Madec, "Ascensio, Ascensus," 137–49 in *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, CEASA 142 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiennes, 1994); John J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St. Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion*, rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 2001), 125–53; Madec, "'Platonism' et 'Christianisme': Analyse du livre VII des *Confessions*," 121–35 in *Lectures Augustiniennes*, CEASA 168 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001); John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Re-Reading the Confessions* (New York: Routledge, 2005), esp. 61–72; Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 121–41. Kenney, *Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), traces the evolution and shifts in his understanding of ascent and his teachings on it.

trapped in birdlime; if purged, it could take flight on its two wings, love of God and love of neighbor. Augustine hoped to coax his hearers to take wing. The psalm's joyous opening verse served as the catalyst: "I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'Let us go to the Lord's house.'" Augustine argued that ordinary Christians, since they are members of the Body of Christ, enjoy a foretaste of what the saints, martyrs, and other "fellow-citizens" now enjoy: "Even while we are still on the journey we find companions who have already seen that city [of God] and they invite us to run toward it."[35]

The fervor in the verse reminded him of the fervor that surrounded the feasts of the North African martyrs. These were celebrations as riotous as Mardi Gras. People used to gather at the martyrs' shrines and there pray, banquet, dance until frenzied, and drink themselves into a "holy stupor."[36] While sometimes an excuse for self-indulgence, these could be mantic rituals whose agitations induced religious visions and ecstasy. Early in his career Augustine had campaigned against them. In this sermon he uttered not a word of protest. Instead, he tapped on them as an emotional analogy for the fervor catechumens and baptized would need for true pilgrimage: "Friends, recall . . . how on such a day crowds stream in together to celebrate, how the crowds fire each other up, how they exhort each other, and say, 'Let us go, let us go.' And some ask, 'Where are we to go?' And others call back: 'To that place! To the holy place!' So they call out to each other, back and forth, igniting one by one until they become like one fiery blaze; and this one blaze, fueled by back-and-forth calls, sweeps itself off to the holy place."[37] This is typical of Augustine the word painter. In a few quick strokes he captures a scene. The emotion in the psalm's verse grabbed him, but so did its sounds: "*In domum Domini ibimus*" ("We shall go to the Lord's house"). Augustine took this melodic phrase and, playing off its alliterations, made it

[35] *en. Ps.* 121.2 (CSEL 95.3:84–85); trans. Boulding, WSA III/20:14.

[36] On these feasts see W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 174–75; Martin Klöckener, "Festa sanctorum et martyrorum," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 1281–89.

[37] *en. Ps.* 121.2 (CSEL 95.3:85); author's translation.

a theme for his own variations (even in English the musicality of Augustine's phrasing can be heard):

> So let us run. Run! For we shall go to the Lord's house (*in domum Domini ibimus*). Let us run for we shall arrive there, there where we shall not grow weary. Let us run to the Lord's house, let our soul be swept into rejoicing by those who say these words to us. For they who speak to us have seen that country before us and cry from a distant age to their descendants, "We will go to the Lord's house: Walk! run!" The apostles have seen it and say to us, "Run! walk! follow! We will go to the Lord's house!" And what does each of us say in reply? "Let me rejoice in those who said to me, 'We will go to the Lord's house.'" Let me rejoice in the Prophets! Let me rejoice in the Apostles! For they all said to us, "We will go to the Lord's house."[38]

Here one glimpses Augustine's grand style. He does not want to instruct; he wants to persuade. And such a passage, while musical, is more notable for its furor of feeling. It is the voice of one trying to bend the hard heart to obedience. Augustine's refrain of "*In domum Domini ibimus*," like Martin Luther King's "I have a dream," was meant to build up a crescendo of feeling. Its alliterative tones were designed to echo in his hearers' ears long after the sermon's end. Augustine wanted to implant it deep within their memory, to make it, quite literally, unforgettable, so that at some later time, perhaps a moment of flagging spirits, it might well up and console in the same way Ambrose's evening hymn welled up and consoled Augustine the night his mother died.

Augustine then noted verse 3 of the Psalm: "Jerusalem is being built as a city." The phrase, he argued, had to be read as prophetic, since in David's time the building of Jerusalem had been completed. The verse also seemed a prophetic echo of 1 Peter's description of the church being built from "living stones." The idea of stones that are *alive* is very odd. This naturally drew Augustine's attention. First, he contrasted spiritual construction projects with physical ones. He had the assembly look around and consider

[38] *en. Ps.* 121.2 (CSEL 95.3:85–86); author's translation.

"this basilica, whose ample size you see." In building the basilica in Hippo workers had laid the foundation on the earth and built from the ground up. Spiritual construction, he noted, was just the opposite. It began from the highest point, that is, from Christ, since Christ served as the foundation from which the church of living stones was built. Augustine then exhorted his hearers: "Let us therefore run there, there where we may be built up." He then noted that if one was to be built into this temple of living stones one had to partake of Christ, who, in his divinity, is the "I Am," a mystery beyond comprehension. Then, drawing on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Augustine stressed Christ's healing work: "Remember what he, whom you cannot comprehend, became for you. Remember the flesh of Christ—through which you were raised when sick and when left half-dead from the wounds of robbers—that you might be brought to the Inn, and there might be cured."[39]

Augustine then returned to verse 2 of the Psalm and reflected on what it meant to "stand in the Lord's house." This required that one be humble and without guile like the disciple Nathanael (John 1:45-51), that one be a "confessor," not a "pretender." The proud were, by contrast, pretenders, frauds, like those who claimed to have musical talents even though they couldn't play a note. God would say to the proud what people used to say to a musical claimant: " 'Play! Let's see if you're a flautist.' The guy wouldn't be able to."[40] The proud would therefore not find themselves among the spiritual "musicians" in the Lord's house. Augustine also stressed that to "stand in the Lord's house" one had to work to rectify the unjust economic order. He appealed to the wealthy to make the indigent their special care. Even an ordinary laborer had to do something, for while "his resources may not equal" those of a wealthy Zacchaeus, "his charity should not be unequal."[41] In the sermon's *peroratio* Augustine returned to the refrain, "We go up to the Lord's house," and he closed with a final torrent of

[39] *en. Ps.* 121.4-5 (CSEL 95.3:87–92); author's translation.
[40] *en. Ps.* 121.8 (CSEL 95.3:97); author's translation.
[41] *en. Ps.* 121.10 (CSEL 95.3:103); author's translation.

imperatives: "These overflowing and urgent words: pluck them up, chew on them, drink them; grow strong on them, run with them, seize them."[42]

These two sermons illustrate, in microcosm, dynamics that run through the larger sequence. They show typical ways Augustine used Scripture: the way he would find one text evoking others; the way he would play with scriptural phrases whose music intrigued him; the way he let the flow of the text serve as the outline of his own remarks. This meant that his instructions to catechumens moved less by logical progression and more by a musical or poetic flow, a pattern of theme and variations on God's word. These two sermons also illustrate a deeper pedagogy that runs through the entire sequence: in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Augustine focused more on doctrinal issues and on an intellectual grasp of faith; in his *Expositions of the Psalms* he concentrated more on the affective and communitarian dimensions of faith. In alternating between John's gospel and the Psalms he created, in effect, a contrapuntal rhythm that aimed at educating, by turns, the mind and the heart.

MELODIC THEMES

Augustine thought of himself as an "expositor" (*tractator*) of Scripture. Thus it was Scripture itself and not theological topics that shaped the organization of his curriculum for catechumens. Nonetheless, as one scans these sermons on John and the Psalms one finds Augustine touching, at one time or another, on the various domains of what we now call systematic theology, exploring issues within Christology or ecclesiology or sacramental theology. (See chart 7 for a survey of topics.) Augustine's approach was more musical than systematic. Theological themes tended to ebb and flow. A given theme might be introduced first in one sermon but left undeveloped. It might then appear a few sermons later, and there be given extended treatment. It might reappear once again, but now set in harmony with or in counterpoint

[42] *en. Ps.* 121.14 (CSEL 95.3:107); author's translation.

against other theological themes. To get a sense of the musicality of Augustine's curriculum, let me touch on four themes that wind their way through the sequence. From this we will see other ways he taught theology to his catechumens.

(1) THE PARADOX OF CHRIST

The mystery of Christ forms a prominent thread within the sequence.[43] In *Tractate* 1, as we saw, Augustine devoted much of the sermon to Christ's divinity. Such sustained treatment is unusual. More often he touched on the mystery of Christ briefly, in easy-to-remember images. When teaching on Psalm 120 he noted verse 4 ("He that guards Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps") and gave it an unexpected christological twist: "It is important that Christ not be asleep in you. . . . 'How,' you ask? Because if your faith goes to sleep, Christ is asleep in you. . . . In the person whose faith does not sleep, in that one Christ stands watch. And if perhaps your faith is asleep . . . then you are like that boat that met a gale while Christ slept. Wake Christ up, and the gales will calm down."[44]

Augustine often described Christ in paradoxical terms. One sees this repeatedly in passing turns of phrase that appear throughout

[43] On Augustine's Christology, a valuable overview is by Brian E. Daley, "A Humble Mediator: the Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine's Christology," *Word and Spirit* 9 (1987): 100–17. Essential is Goulven Madec, *Le Christ de saint Augustin: La Patrie et la Voie*, Jésus et Jésus-Christ 36, rev. ed. (Paris: Desclée, 2001). See also T. J. Van Bavel, *Recherches sur la christologie de saint Augustin*, Paradosis 10 (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1954); Joanne McWilliam, "The Study of Augustine's Christology in the Twentieth Century," 183–205 in her *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992); Goulven Madec, "Christus," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 845–908; Brian E. Daley, "Christology," *ATA*, 164–69; Michael Cameron, "The Christological Substructure of Augustine's Figurative Exegesis," 74–103 in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. Pamela Bright (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999); Lewis Ayres, "Augustine on the Rule of Faith: Rhetoric, Christology, and the Foundations of Christian Thinking," *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005): 33–49; Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo, 396–430*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[44] *en. Ps.* 120.7 (CSEL 95.3:68); author's translation. See also *s.* 63.2.

the sequence: Christ is the "human God";[45] "the man Jesus . . . the God Jesus";[46] "the Word of God, the Word made flesh, Son of the Father, Son of God, Son of Man, exalted that he might create us, humble so as to re-create us";[47] "in that Christ was human, God died; and in that he was God, humankind was raised and arose and ascended into heaven."[48] As Brian Daley has noted, Augustine, unlike his contemporaries in the Greek East, did not usually engage in "technical speculation on the unity and inner constitution of Jesus' person"; instead he preferred "to speak of the mystery of Christ in concrete, rhetorically challenging phrases that let the believer savor the inherent paradox of preaching an incarnate God."[49]

Augustine communicated this same paradox in other ways. He also drew on the biblical text at hand and gave its imagery a paradoxical turn. For example, in *Tractate* 7 he played off the words of John 1:29 ("Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world") to show the subversive power of Christ as Lamb: "When the time came for God to be merciful, the Lamb came. What a Lamb it is—one wolves are afraid of! What a Lamb—one, though slain, slays the lion! The devil, you see, is called 'a lion going about roaring, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Pet 5:8). The Lamb's blood conquered the lion."[50] In *Exposition of Ps 123*, Augustine noted something odd about the note of joy in the Psalm: Christians sang as if they had already arrived at the kingdom even though they were still on the road. While the full reality of the kingdom lay in the future, Christians' present identity as the Body of Christ gave them a mysterious foretaste, allowing them ways here and

[45] *Io. eu. tr.* 4.14 (CCL 36:38); author's translation.

[46] *Io. eu. tr.* 8.1 (CCL 36:82); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:169.

[47] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.1 (CCL 36:101); author's translation.

[48] *en. Ps.* 130.10 (CSEL 95.3:281); author's translation.

[49] Daley, "Humble Mediator," 101. On Christologies in the Greek East at the time of Augustine see Bernard Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandre: L'humanité, le salut, et la question monophysite*, Théologie historique 104 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997); John A. McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy—Its History, Theology, and Texts* (1994; repr. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

[50] *Io. eu. tr.* 7.6 (CCL 36:69–70); author's translation.

now of savoring that future joy. This paradox led him to ponder the paradoxical identity of Christ: "Let us therefore walk as if we were on the road. For the king of our homeland has made himself the road to it. . . ."

> There he is truth (*ueritas*); here, the road (*uia*).
> Where do we go? To truth.
> How do we go? By faith.
> Where do we go? To Christ.
> How do we go? Through Christ.[51]

Here he plays on the vocabulary of John's gospel, that Christ is "the way and the truth," that Christ is the means and the end, the *uia* ("the roadway") and the *ueritas* ("truth").

Augustine drew imagery not only from Scripture but also from the local culture. One favorite was that of Christ the doctor (*Christus medicus*).[52] At the end of *Tractate* 1 he had touched on the idea; in *Tractate* 3 he drew it out further. He suggested that the Law of the Old Testament gave a medical prognosis, and then argued:

> Now the sick confess that they are ill; let the doctor come and heal the sick. Who is the doctor? Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . [H]e is the one and only doctor for our wounds. . . . [I]t was not as a lesson in power that he accepted the cross, but as an example of patience. It was there he cured your wounds, where he so long endured his own; it was there that he healed your eternal death, where he had the goodness to die in time. He even died—or was it death that died in him? What a death it was that slew death![53]

Christ showed, in Augustine's view, the courage and compassion of a plague doctor by making himself vulnerable to the various epidemics devastating humankind at every level—physical,

[51] *en. Ps.* 123.2 (CSEL 95.3:130); author's translation. See also *s.* 123.3, 141.4; *Io. eu. tr.* 13.4. On this theme see Madec, *Le Christ de saint Augustin*, esp. 31–44.

[52] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.19, 2.16 (heals eyes); 7.2 (heals insanity); 12.12; *en. Ps.* 121.5 (inn of Samaritan as clinic); 125.2, 15 (inn of Samaritan); 130.7 (healed Paul).

[53] *Io. eu. tr.* 3.2-3 (CCL 36:21); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:69–70.

affective, interpersonal, social. Christ used an unusual pharmacology: whereas human physicians administered medicines, Christ the doctor, by taking our diseases into his very being, had made himself the medicine.[54]

Augustine did not always use paradoxes. One theme that appears repeatedly is that of Christ the inner teacher.[55] Playing on a Stoic idea, Augustine claimed that within each person was an inner word, a *logos*. For Augustine the Christian, that inner *Logos* was none other than Christ. As he put it in his early treatise, *On the Teacher* (*De magistro*), "The truth which presides over the mind itself within us . . . the One who is consulted and who is said to 'dwell in the inner person' (Eph 3:14-17) . . . the One who teaches us [is] Christ. . . . This is the Wisdom that every rational soul consults."[56] This idea affected Augustine's pedagogy. As he saw it, he as "outer teacher" was not necessarily giving people something new; rather, he was reminding them of truths Christ the "inner teacher" was teaching them. True listening was thus a dual activity: "Lend your ears to me, your hearts to [Christ], that you might

[54] On this theme see Rudolf Arbesmann, "The Concept of *Christus Medicus* in St. Augustine," *Traditio* 10 (1954): 1–28; Marie-François Berrouard, "Le Christ Médicin," BA 71 (1993): 854–55; Thomas F. Martin, "Paul the Patient: *Christus Medicus* and the '*Stimulus Carnis*' (2 Cor 12:7): A Consideration of Augustine's Medicinal Christology," *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001): 219–56; Isabelle Bochet, "Medicina, medicus," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2004–2010): 1230–34; Susan Blackburn Griffith, "Medical Imagery in the 'New' Sermons of Augustine," *Studia Patristica* 43 (2006): 107–12; William Harmless, "Christ the Pediatrician: Augustine on the Diagnosis and Treatment of the Injured Vocation of the Child," 127–53 in *The Vocation of the Child*, ed. Patrick M. Brennan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

[55] This theme of Christ the "inner teacher" appears elsewhere in this sequence: *Io. eu. tr.* 1.7, 7.9, 10.1 and 9; *en. Ps.* 126.2. It appears regularly in other sermons: e.g. *Io. eu. tr.* 20.3, 26.7, 40.5; *s.*102.2, 153.1; *ep. Io. tr.* 3.13. On this theme see Marie-François Berrouard, "Le Maitre intérieur," BA 71 (1993): 839–40; Therese Fuhrer, "Magister, magisterium," *Aug-Lex* 3 (2004–2010): 1092–93; Phillip Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88–102.

[56] *mag.* 11.38 (CCL 29:195–96); trans. Robert Russell, *AOW*, 70. See Goulven Madec, "Augustin et son fils: Le Christ Maître intérieur," *Lectures Augustiniennes*, 43–57.

fill both."[57] In *Tractate* 3, Augustine asked the catechumens and faithful to "ponder the lowliness of Christ" by turning within: "Let him speak within you. The one dwelling within you says it much better than the one shouting from outside. Let him who has begun to dwell in your hearts show you the grace of his humility."[58] This idea affected how Augustine acknowledged applause. Toward the end of this same sermon he quoted from Psalm 25: "that I may gaze on the delight of the Lord." His audience recognized the passage and cheered. Augustine interpreted their applause in light of Christ the inner teacher: "My brothers and sisters, why this cheering, why this excitement, why this show of love, if not because that is a spark of this charity?"[59]

Augustine also drew on Paul's theme of Christ as the new Adam. Typically, he framed this using rhymed antitheses. In *Exposition of Ps 119* he contrasted Christ's descent with Adam's fall:

quia cecidit Adam,	Because Adam fell,
ideo descendit Christus:	Christ therefore descended:
ille cecidit,	the first one fell,
ille descendit,	the other descended;
ille cecidit superbia,	the first one fell from pride,
ille descendit misericordia.	the other descended in mercy.[60]

According to Christine Mohrmann, Augustine's fondness for antithetical parallelisms came from the Psalms themselves: this figure of speech is "the essence of his homiletic style, and results in a way of thinking that is all his own. . . . Its fundamental rhythm dominates not only the words, but the thought itself."[61]

This Adam/Christ typology also appears in an unusual figurative interpretation. Augustine claimed that Adam's name had a

[57] *Io. eu. tr.* 1.7 (CCL 36:4); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:44.

[58] *Io. eu. tr.* 3.15 (CCL 36:27); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:79.

[59] *Io. eu. tr.* 3.21 (CCL 36:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:84.

[60] *en. Ps.* 119.2 (CSEL 95.3:40); author's translation.

[61] Christine Mohrmann, "Saint Augustin prédicateur," in *Études sur le latin des Chrétiens*, 2d ed. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1961), 1:391–402, at 397.

mystical meaning, that the Greek words for the four directions pointed to Adam:

A = *anatole* ("east")
D = *dysis* ("west")
A = *arktos* ("north")
M = *mesembria* ("south")

This meant that, symbolically speaking, in Adam the whole world was contained and that in Christ, the new Adam, the world was transfigured.[62] Another Adam/Christ contrast appears in *Tractate* 10. Augustine noted that, according to John 2:20, it had taken forty-six years to build the temple in Jerusalem. Like Origen and Ambrose, Augustine presumed that such a minute detail held some hidden meaning. He and his congregation shared with pagan intellectuals a fascination with numbers and presumed that numbers held some mystical import. According to Augustine's reading, the forty-six years it took to build the temple mystically referred to Adam. In Greek, as in Latin, numbers are written as letters. In Greek numbering, Adam's name equaled forty-six (A=1, D=4, A=1, M=40). This led to Augustine's interpretation: in Christ's death the old temple (= Adam) was destroyed; in Christ's resurrection three days later, a new temple was built. Since three represented the Trinity, Christ the New Temple thus reconstructed the fallen temple of humankind and reconsecrated it by restoring humanity as a true image of God.[63]

(2) THE CHURCH AS BODY OF CHRIST

Augustine often used biblical images to hold together different facets of his theology. He knit his Christology to his ecclesiology

[62] *Io. eu. tr.* 9.14 (CCL 36:98).

[63] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.10-12 (CCL 36:106–8). On the intellectual context see Joel Kalvesmaki, *The Theology of Arithmetic: Number Symbolism in Platonism and Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); on this in Augustine see Maurice Pontet, *L'exégèse de s. Augustin prédicateur* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 569–73.

by using an image from the letter to the Ephesians: the church was the Body of Christ, while the Risen Lord was its Head. Augustine referred to this as *Totus Christus*, "the whole Christ." In *Exposition of Ps 56* he gives the classic account:

> The whole Christ (*totus Christus*) is both Head and Body, as you know quite well. The Head is Christ our Savior Himself, who, having suffered under Pontius Pilate, rose from the dead and now sits at the right hand of the Father. His Body is the Church, not simply this or that church, but the Church scattered across the entire globe—and not only people who live at the present moment, but also those who have gone before us belong to it, and so too do those who will come after us, even to the end of the ages.[64]

This theme appears frequently through this sequence of sermons. In *Exposition of Ps 127*, Augustine gave it a clear, brief exposition: "There are many Christians, and there is one Christ. Christians themselves with their Head—who ascended into heaven—are one Christ. It is not that He is one and we are many, but we many are one in that One. Christ then is one person, Head and Body. What is his Body? His church."[65]

This idea guided his way of reading the Psalms. One finds him asking again and again: "Who is speaking?" This would have been an obvious question for readers in the ancient world as they read poems or plays or philosophic dialogues, since their texts lacked quotation marks. It is no surprise that Augustine asked it as he walked his congregation through the poetry of the Psalms. Scholars refer to this ancient technique of exploring the identity and intention of the speaker as "prosopological exegesis." The term "prosopological" comes from the Greek *prosopon*, meaning

[64] *en. Ps.* 56.1 (CCL 39:693–95); author's translation, *AOW*, 193. On the *Totus Christus* see Madec, *Le Christ de saint Augustin*, 149–55; Fiedrowicz, "General Introduction," WSA III/15:50–57; Brian E. Daley, "The Law, the Whole Christ, and the Spirit of Love: Grace as a Trinitarian Gift in Augustine's Theology," *Augustinian Studies* 41 (2010): 123–44; Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 283–84, 287–90.

[65] *en. Ps.* 127.3 (CSEL 95.3:210); author's translation.

"person," especially a "character" in a play.[66] As Augustine saw it, the speaker of the Psalms is not—or at least not simply—King David, the Psalms' purported author. The speaker in the deeper sense is Christ. In the case of the Psalms, Christ has two voices and speaks sometimes as the risen Christ and other times as his Body, the church. So in asking "who is speaking?" Augustine was inquiring whether the Psalmist's voice within any verse is the voice of Christ the Head or the voice of the church as Christ's Body. He could highlight their distinction and, paradoxically, their deeper union:

> Christ and Church—two in one flesh. Take account of the distance between the two's majesty. Two, clearly. Not that we are the Word, not that we were God in the beginning, not that through us all things were made. But when it comes to flesh, there's Christ, both Him and us. So don't be amazed by this in the Psalms. He says many things in the person of the Head; many others in the person of His members; and this all as being just one person, and so He speaks as one. Don't be surprised that there are two in one voice if there are two in one flesh.[67]

In *Exposition of Ps 122* he used this Head/Body ecclesiology to explain the deeper meaning of singing the Psalms of Ascent: since "the Head came down and ascended with the Body," Christians, even during this life, could sing joyously, for they enjoyed some foretaste of life in God:

Si per caritatem	If through love
ipse nobiscum in terra est,	He himself is with us on earth,
per eamdem caritatem	then through this same love
nos cum eo in caelo sumus . . .	we are with Him in heaven . . .
Ergo et ille adhuc deorsum est,	He is therefore below,
et nos iam sursum sumus:	and we are above:
ille deorsum est	He is below
compassione caritatis,	through the compassion of love,

[66] On this prosopological exegesis of Psalms see Fiedrowicz, "General Introduction," WSA III/15:50–60; Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere*, 171–72.

[67] *en. Ps.* 142.3 (CCL 40:2061–62); author's translation, *AOW*, 195.

nos sursum sumus	we are above
spe caritatis.	through the hope of love.[68]

In the course of the sequence he would draw on other biblical images to describe the church. He would compare it to Jacob's ladder: that just as angels had ascended and descended on the ladder, so too the church had both climbers and backsliders.[69] Similarly, Augustine (following Cyprian) described the church as an ark that, like Noah's, rescued one from the "flood of the world." Moreover, the church, like Noah's ark, contained both "doves" and "crows": "Noah . . . had a crow with him there, he also had a dove; the ark contained each kind of bird; and if the ark was representing the Church, you can of course see how it must be that, in these unsettled times, the Church has both sorts, both the crow and the dove. Who are the crows? Those who look after their own interests. Who the doves? Those who look after Christ's interests."[70] According to Augustine the call of each bird revealed its true character: good Christians, like doves, cooed with love; evil-living Christians, like crows, were "full of loud shrieking, not cooing" and reveled "in an empty happiness."[71]

The most striking of these biblically based images is the church as the inn of the Samaritan. In *Exposition of Ps 121*, as we saw, Augustine cited the parable of the Good Samaritan as a way to speak of Christ the Doctor, *Christus medicus.* In *Exposition of Ps 125* he returned to the parable, but here he stressed its implications for ecclesiology. First, Augustine exhorted his hearers to ascend to the heavenly Jerusalem by good works, not descend from it. The idea of ascending and descending from Jerusalem seemed to him an echo of Jesus' parable, for the man in the parable had come

[68] *en. Ps.* 122.1 (CSEL 95.3:108–9); author's translation.

[69] *en. Ps.* 119.2 (CSEL 95.3:42–43).

[70] *Io. eu. tr.* 6.2 (CCL 36:54); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:122–23.

[71] *Io. eu. tr.* 6.2 (CCL 36:53); author's translation. On this sermon see Adam D. Ployd, "The Unity of the Dove: The Sixth Homily on the Gospel of John and Augustine's Trinitarian Solution to the Donatist Schism," *Augustinian Studies* 42 (2011): 57–80.

down from Jerusalem. According to Augustine the parable held hidden allegorical meanings: that the man who descended from Jerusalem and fell among thieves was Adam; that "Adam is all of us"; that the priest and the Levite who passed by symbolized the Law, which could not heal; that the Samaritan was Christ, who healed us by lifting us upon his "beast," that is, "his flesh," and then "took us to the inn, that is, the church"; that Christ "entrusted us to the innkeeper, that is, the apostle" Paul, and left "two coins for our healing: love of God and love of neighbor."[72] With this allegory Augustine was able to teach the catechumens ecclesiology with image: that baptized Christians were not the healed, but the recovering; that the catechumens would face a lifelong convalescence; and that they, like Paul, would have to learn to glory in their weakness.[73]

(3) BAPTISM AND THE DONATISTS

Augustine and those who attended his church in Hippo referred to themselves as "Catholics" because they were allied with and recognized by a worldwide communion of Christian churches across the Roman Empire. But at the time he gave these sermons Catholics were a local minority, not only in Hippo Regius but also across the provinces of Numidia and the Mauretanias. For much of the fourth century the majority church of North Africa was Donatist.[74] Donatists claimed that they—and they alone—were the one true church, the true descendants of the church of the martyrs,

[72] *en. Ps.* 125.15 (CSEL 95.3:169–71); author's translation.

[73] See *s.* 131.6, 151.4-5.

[74] On Donatism see Frend, *The Donatist Church*; Maureen A. Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 169–73, 270–305; Serge Lancel and James S. Alexander, "*Donatistae*," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 606–38; and Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On Augustine's anti-Donatist theology see especially Yves Congar, "Introduction générale," BA 28:71–124, and Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 105–32.

the church who alone possessed the Holy Spirit, and the only one whose Spirit-charged waters of baptism could cleanse sinners of their sins. In their view Augustine and those in his church were not real Christians; they were the "church of Judas," a demonic parody of authentic Christianity.

This split within the African Church between Catholics and Donatists dated back nearly a century by this point, to the 310s. It originated with the disputed election of Caecilian as bishop of Carthage. Opponents charged that the unpopular Caecilian had been ordained by a *traditor*—one who had "handed over" copies of the Bible to Roman authorities during the persecution of the emperor Diocletian and had thus become apostate. In some African eyes this polluted Caecilian's ordination. Some bishops soon ordained a rival who was succeeded, in turn, by Donatus of Casae, the man from whom the schism gets its name. Before long, rival churches existed not only in Carthage but throughout North Africa and in time, in many areas, the majority of Christians were Donatist. This rivalry, always vociferous, became on occasion quite violent, not unlike fractures between coreligionists today in the Middle East. And as with these, political, economic, and ethnic factors came into play, hardening divisions and fueling grievances.

The Donatists worked from two principles they took from Cyprian of Carthage: (i) there was no salvation outside the church; (ii) baptism—which made salvation possible—could only be given by one still in the church. The Donatists held that, since Caecilian had been "outside" the church, all sacraments rendered by him were null and void. They extended the same claim to those rendered by his allies—the churches across the empire who accepted his legitimacy—and by any of his spiritual descendants, such as Augustine's friend Aurelius of Carthage, and Augustine himself. They alone, the Donatists claimed, remained the world's one true church, the church "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:27). Catholic baptism, far from cleansing one of sin, only polluted one's soul with new layers of filth. Donatists therefore rebaptized any Catholics who came to their church.

Throughout this sermon-series Augustine again and again challenged Donatist views. He granted that the Donatists had truly

received baptism, but he insisted that it was of no benefit to them: "Imagine you are a soldier; if you have the emperor's mark as one in the army, you have it safely; if you have it as someone outside the army, not only is that mark of no benefit to you as a soldier, it will also get you punished as a deserter."[75] The Donatists, likewise, had "the tattoo of baptism," but it only marked them out as deserters. At other times Augustine lampooned them. He noted that Psalm 95 was a song in which "all the earth" was called "to sing a new song." He added that "barbarous peoples" were now Christian, that "there are regions where Roman rule has not reached, yet Christ has already claimed them."[76] This international perspective sparked a favorite rejoinder against the Donatists—that they were too provincial and ignored the unity of the church across the world: "The clouds of heaven thunder their witness that God's dwelling is being constructed throughout the world, and yet all the while [Donatist] frogs are croaking from the swamp, 'We are the only Christians!' "[77]

In *Tractate* 5, Augustine treated the Donatist question at length. He began by using one of his favorite devices, a knotty problem: the Synoptic Gospels indicated the Baptist had recognized Jesus before the baptism, while the Gospel of John said he did not know Jesus until afterward.[78] Augustine then made a bold claim: that he would not only resolve this contradiction but that his solution both vindicated the truth of the Catholic position on baptism

[75] *Io. eu. tr.* 6.15 (CCL 36:61); author's translation. This "character" was a tattoo, normally on the back of the right hand; see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Military Survey*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 2:616, 649; Bradley Mark Peper, "On the Mark: Augustine's Baptismal Analogy of the *Nota Militaris*," *Augustinian Studies* 38 (2007): 353–64.

[76] *en. Ps.* 95.2 (CCL 39:1344); trans. Boulding, WSA III/18:425.

[77] *en. Ps.* 95.11 (CCL 39:1350); trans. Boulding, WSA III/18:433.

[78] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.1 (CCL 36:40–41). Augustine first poses the dilemma in *Io. eu. tr.* 4.15-16, and refers to it in *en. Ps.* 126.13. He pits Matt 3:14 (with its clear implication of John's recognition of Jesus' true identity) against John 1:30-33 (where John says he "did not know him" until "the dove from heaven . . . remained on him").

and undermined the Donatist case. His argument—stripped of its musical rhetoric, its careful repetitions, its biblical citations—was simple enough: (i) "John is truthful, Christ is truth," and therefore there could be no ultimate contradiction between the two; (ii) it was not a matter of John not knowing Jesus, but rather of John learning something new, of knowing "more fully One whom he knew already";[79] (iii) the new thing John learned was that Christ had retained for himself the power of baptism and that, no matter whether the minister was good or bad, it was Christ who baptized; (iv) this distinction between the minister of baptism and the power of baptism was what the descending dove had taught John. Augustine thus claimed that what John had learned from the dove was Augustine's own argument against the Donatists: that it was Christ who baptized, that the spiritual pedigree of the minister (whether the hotly disputed Caecilian or Augustine himself) was ultimately irrelevant, and that the Donatists only denigrated the power of Christ by their rebaptizing ways.

Here I have stripped away all but the core argument—in other words, exactly those elements that made Augustine's argument both entertaining and pedagogically effective. Let me now retrace several devices. First, Augustine presented the opening premise in a singsong tongue twister (audible even in translation):

> John is truthful, Christ is truth; John is truthful, but every truthful person gets truthfulness from truth; therefore if John is truthful, and a person can only get truthfulness from truth, from whom did he get his being truthful but from the one who said "I am the truth"? So then, neither could the Truth speak against the truthful nor the truthful against the truth. Truth sent the truthful, and he was truthful, therefore, because he had been sent by Truth. If the Truth had sent John, Christ had sent him.[80]

[79] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.2 (CCL 36:41); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:102.

[80] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.1 (CCL 36:41); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:101 (modified): "*Verax Iohannes, ueritas Christus; uerax Iohannes, sed omnis uerax a ueritate uerax est; si ergo uerax est Iohannes, et uerax esse homo non potest, nisi a ueritate; a quo erat uerax, nisi ab eo qui dixit: Ego sum ueritas? Non ergo, possit dicere, aut ueritas*

Second, Augustine encapsulated key points in epigrams. For example, he played on the distinction between the divine Word and the Word made flesh to create a terse paradox:

> Just as [Christ] created Mary and was created through Mary,
> so too did he give John a baptism and was baptized by John.[81]

Third, Augustine could turn arguments into minidramas. At one point he role-played John the Baptist interviewing himself:

> [John as interviewer]: "Who is he?"
>
> [John as respondent]: "The Lord. I know that."
>
> [interviewer]: "But did you ever know that this Lord who has the authority to baptize would not be giving this authority to any servant, but would be holding on to it, so that those baptized through the ministry of a servant would not attribute his baptism to the servant but to the Lord? You never knew this, did you?"
>
> [respondent]: "No, I did not know [that]."
>
> [interviewer]: "What did he say to me?"
>
> [respondent]: "On whomever you see the Spirit coming down like a dove and resting on him, he is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit."[82]

Early in his career Augustine had once written a whole book, *The Soliloquies* (*Soliloquia*), in this style.[83] Here he acted it out. Finally, Augustine relied, as usual, on analogies. He compared the corrupt minister to a conduit used for irrigation: "Christ's gift is not contaminated; what flows through the minister remains pure, the

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contra ueracem, aut uerax contra ueritatem . . . Si ueritas Iohannem miserat, Christus eum miserat."

[81] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.4 (CCL 36:43); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:104.

[82] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.9 (CCL 36:45); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:109.

[83] On *Soliloquia* see Catherine Conybeare, *The Irrational Augustine*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Brian Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

liquid that passes through him reaches fertile soil. . . . The water passes along a stone channel, the water passes along to the little garden beds. It produces no fruit in the stone channel, but nonetheless it makes the gardens very fruitful indeed."[84] This is the heart of Augustine's polemic: what mattered was not the minister, not the "stone channel," but Christ the gardener and giver of the growth. As Augustine saw it, Donatist fretting about a minister's spiritual pedigree was hopelessly clericalist.

In this sermon Augustine did not single out the catechumens, yet what he said was of vital importance to them. He gave them key perspectives on their own upcoming baptism: that it was Christ, not Augustine, who would baptize them, that it was Christ's power, not their own good works, that would re-create them. He also armed them with perspectives that would help them fend off Donatist jibes and would perhaps prevent them from being wooed into the Donatist camp.

(4) A SPIRITUALITY FOR EXILES

The spirituality Augustine passed on through this sermon sequence was a spirituality of pilgrimage. Often he sounded a somber note: "In this life we wander as pilgrims; we sigh for the return to [Jerusalem]; for so long have we been wretched, so long toiling—until we go back."[85] Such melancholy sentiments were standard fare among ancients. To them earth seemed a swirling chaos set beneath the stately order of the heavens. Here demonic powers roamed about freely. Here life was an *agon*, a combat.[86] Such feelings were not ungrounded. The poor in Augustine's assembly, like the poor in much of the world today, suffered terribly: from hunger, devastating

[84] *Io. eu. tr.* 5.15 (CCL 36:50); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:116.

[85] *en. Ps.* 125.1 (CSEL 95.3:163); author's translation.

[86] See Augustine's treatise *De agone*, composed early in his episcopal career. On this ancient worldview see E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 7–8; Suzanne Poque, *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d'Augustin d'Hippone: Images héroïques*, 2 vols., CEASA 105 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1984), 1:71–84.

plagues, high infant mortality, rigid social structures, a brutal government. Even the wealthy escaped few of these ills.

The task, according to Augustine, was to journey from this "valley of tears" to the "mountain" of Christ the divine Word. Yet to speak of life in Christ was impossible since, as Paul said, it was a life that "the eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ascended into the human heart." According to Augustine this journey was possible only because Christ the mountain had made himself the valley:

Ipse tibi fecit patiendo	By suffering, he made himself for you
conuallem plorationis,	a valley of weeping,
qui fecit manendo	By remaining as he was, he made himself
montem adscensionis.	a mountain of ascent.[87]

Christ was thus the exemplar of Christian spirituality. Just as a mother would eat solid food so that through her flesh she would produce milk for her infant, so Christ the "food of angels was made flesh, was made milk." So Augustine exhorted his hearers: "Nurse on what he became for you, and you will grow into what he is."[88] The humble path Christ followed defined the disciple's path: the journey upward to God was a journey downward; climbing the mountain meant descending to become milk for the weakest.

Augustine stressed that spirituality take its cues from the Scriptures. He thus begged his hearers to approach God's word "as if you were hearing yourselves, as if you were looking at yourselves in the mirror of the Scriptures." The Psalms mirrored the voice of Christ, both Head and Body, and that voice had a wide register of feelings: "What then do they sing, these members of Christ? What do they sing? For they are in love, and loving, they sing; yearning, they sing. Sometimes when troubled, they sing, and sometimes exulting, they sing; when in hope, they sing."[89] Augustine noted that

[87] *en. Ps.* 119.1 (CSEL 95.3:38); author's translation.
[88] *en. Ps.* 119.2 (CSEL 95.3:42); author's translation.
[89] *en. Ps.* 123.2-3 (CSEL 95.3:128–31); author's translation, *AOW*, 196.

Scripture's mysteries gave the catechumens and faithful eyes to see the mysteries at play within their everyday world. In *Tractate* 9 he noted that the gospel spoke of the marriage feast at Cana at which Christ miraculously transformed water into wine. Augustine knew his audience's fascination with miracles. He himself tended to downplay such things. In this sermon he pitted one-time miracles like Cana against the everyday miracles of nature: that "on that day at the wedding" Christ "made wine," yet every year it "is the same Lord who does this on the vines." Augustine then pointed out: rains come, vines sprout, grapes ripen, wine ferments; but this natural process "does not amaze us because it happens every year; by its regularity it has lost its wonderment." He then explored what diminished people's capacity for wonder:

> But because people have been so intent on other things that they have given up reflecting on the works of God and thereby praising the creator every day, it is as if God has kept in reserve some unusual things to do, and thus by miracles to rouse a slumbering humanity to render him due worship. Having died, he rose again; people were amazed; yet how many are born every day, and no one is amazed. If we thought about it a little more rationally, it is a more wonderful miracle for someone who did not exist just to be, than for someone who did exist to come back to life.[90]

As Augustine saw it, people's wonder was too narrow; their sleepy eyes missed the extraordinary in the ordinary. To counter this he recommended praise of God; praise would rouse them and sharpen their sight. By this wake-up they too would become the stuff of miracles: "Let us knock so that he may open, and make us drunk on invisible wine; because we too ourselves were also water, and he has made us wine, he has made us wise, given us the flavor and taste of wisdom."[91]

[90] *Io. eu. tr.* 8.1 (CCL 36:81–82); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:168. See also *s.* 247.7. On the wider context see Wendy Cotter, ed., *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1999). On this theme in Augustine see Jean-Michel Roessli, "Mirabilia, miraculum," *Aug-Lex* 4.1/2 (2012): 26–29.

[91] *Io. eu. tr.* 8.3 (CCL 36:83); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:171.

Augustine offered perspectives on prayer. He read the story of Christ's cleansing of the temple as an instruction on prayer: that just as Christ had cleansed the temple of Jerusalem, so the catechumens and baptized were to cleanse the temple of their hearts. Moreover, he noted, Christ the inner teacher was also an inner listener: "Do not turn your eyes to some mountain, do not lift your face to the stars or the sun or moon; do not think that you will be heard when you pray on the sea; no, loathe such prayers. Just clean up the inner chamber of your heart; wherever you are, wherever you pray, the one who listens is within."[92] When preaching on Psalm 129, Augustine noted its opening verse: "out of the deep have I called to you, O Lord." It reminded him of Jonah, who had cried from the depths: "Those waves . . . did not block his prayer from reaching God, nor could the beast's belly squelch his pleading voice. It penetrated all things; it burst through all things . . . since the ears of God were in the praying heart."[93] In the same way both catechumens and faithful needed to see "from what depths we call out to the Lord"; like Jonah, "we cry out, groan, sigh until . . . delivered."[94] This praying with tears and groans was exactly how Augustine himself had prayed since the days when he had been a catechumen under Ambrose.[95] As he once told a correspondent, in prayer "this task is very often carried out more with sighs than words, more with weeping than with speaking."[96]

According to Augustine such sighing was the voice of the Spirit within. He drew out this theme at length in *Tractate* 6. In the *exordium* he raised a knotty problem: Why had the Spirit appeared *as a dove*? Augustine solved the riddle by playing on the double meaning of the Latin verb "*gemere*," which on the one hand meant the "sighing" of a person and on the other the "cooing" of a dove. Augustine used the *double entendre* to explain the Spirit's role: "Cooing [*gemitus*] is what a dove does, even so, a dove coos [*gemunt*] in love;

[92] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.1 (CCL 36:100–101); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:197.
[93] *en. Ps.* 129.1 (CSEL 95.3:248–49); author's translation.
[94] *en. Ps.* 129.1 (CSEL 95.3:249); author's translation.
[95] *conf.* 9.4.8 (CCL 27:137).
[96] *ep.* 130.20 (CCL 31B:227); trans. Hill, WSA II/2:193.

then listen to what the apostle says and do not be surprised that the Holy Spirit wanted to be revealed in the likeness of a dove: 'For we do not know how to pray as we ought,' he says, 'but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unutterable sighing' [*gemitibus*, Rom 8:26]."[97] The mention of sighing led Augustine back to a theme from his sermons on the Psalms: "The Holy Spirit teaches us to sigh, for he is reminding us that we are on pilgrimage and teaching us to sigh for our home country, and, with that longing, we sigh."[98] With this one word Augustine passed on to the catechumens a cluster of associations: that the Spirit spoke within; that the Spirit spoke not in words but in inexpressible feelings; that this inner longing was in fact a way of voicing one's love of God; and that by this one discovered one's true status as an exile yearning for the kingdom.

This spirituality could not be merely interior; it had to be lived out. In the sequence's inaugural sermon Augustine noted that in singing psalms what mattered was not the well-tuned voice but the well-wrought life: "You can test the truth of what you are singing only if you are beginning to act in harmony with your song. . . . Begin to act on it, and then see for yourself what we are telling you. Then your tears will flow at every word; then as the psalm is sung your heart will do what it sings."[99] Augustine believed that with a changed heart came changed living, and that was his ultimate concern and measure. Typically he used evocative images to map out the contours of such living. In his sermon on Psalm 128 he stressed that living out Gospel imperatives meant following the Spirit's music: "Just as a dancer moves his arms and legs to the music, likewise those who dance God's Law follow its rhythm by what they do."[100] On another occasion he noted verse 5 of Psalm 125: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." This idea of sowing in tears reminded Augustine of the fact that local farmers planted wheat during the rainy North African winter. Thus

[97] *Io. eu. tr.* 6.2 (CCL 36:53); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:121 (modified).
[98] *Io. eu. tr.* 6.2 (CCL 36:53); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:122 (modified).
[99] *en. Ps.* 119.9 (CSEL 95.3:54); trans. Boulding, WSA III/19:507–8.
[100] *en. Ps.* 128.1 (CSEL 95.3:232); author's translation.

he exhorted: "When the farmer troops out with the plough and brings along seed: Is the wind not sometimes fierce? Do [cold] showers deter him? No—he looks up at the sky, sees it lowering, shivers with cold; and yet he goes out and sows. For he is afraid: if he were just to watch the foul weather and wait for sunshine, the time would pass away, and he would find that he has nothing to harvest. Friends, do not put things off; sow in winter, sow good works, even while you weep."[101]

Sowing good works meant taking care of the poor. Augustine, like Ambrose, was often critical of the elite: that their pursuit of wealth and honor and power produced only destitution and greed; that they invested more effort in beautifying their houses than in working for justice—ignoring the obvious fact that mortality made their houses more "an inn for passing guests" than "a permanent residence."[102] He noted Psalm 131's mention of the Lord's temple. For Augustine the true temple was the heart. It was our one true private possession. The fixation on treating physical possessions as private ended badly: "Because of those things we individually possess, there arise lawsuits, enmities, squabbles, wars, riots . . . scandals, sins, inequities, murders. And for what? . . . Shall we go to court over those things we hold in common? In common we inhale this air; in common we all behold the sun."[103] Thus he begged catechumens and baptized: while they did not need to dispense with private possessions they needed to be less infatuated by them. He called them to think of their heart as their true home. There, Christ was to be their houseguest: "Make a place for him."[104]

Through this sequence, themes intertwined. Augustine's spirituality for exiles intertwined with his paradoxical Christology. In his *Exposition of Ps 125* he noted that the psalm spoke of the exiles returning to Jerusalem. For Augustine, Christians too were exiles, and in their journey to the heavenly Jerusalem they would discover that Christ had already built their road home: "For Christ

[101] *en. Ps.* 125.13 (CSEL 95.3:182); author's translation. See also *en. Ps.* 120.2.
[102] *en. Ps.* 122.8 (CSEL 95.3:120); author's translation.
[103] *en. Ps.* 131.5 (CSEL 95.3:295–96); author's translation.
[104] *en. Ps.* 131.6 (CSEL 95.3:296–97); trans. Boulding, WSA III/20:159.

himself became our road. Do you not risk running into highway bandits? He says to you: 'I have paved you a road home. Don't leave the road. I've built such a road that no bandit dares to get close to you.' Walk therefore in Christ, and sing rejoicing, sing as one comforted."[105] Note Augustine's mention of banditry. In his time, travel by road could be perilous, especially in remote areas. On one overland trip Augustine himself just missed being ambushed and killed by Donatist assassins.[106] It was only natural that he reassured his hearers that on their journey home Christ had made his royal road secure.

TURNING TO THE CATECHUMENS

From time to time, over the course of this four-month sequence, Augustine turned to the catechumens and addressed them directly. Most turns were brief. Only in *Tractate* 11—given on the first Sunday of Lent, or just before—did the catechumens receive Augustine's concerted and sustained attention. These turns, while important, obviously form one thread among the sequence's many threads—christological, ecclesiological, sacramental, spiritual. Obviously it was not simply these brief turns that served as the catechumens' instruction; it was the sermons in their entirety, their wide-ranging topics. Let us now examine the most explicit of these turns and see in what ways and for what reasons Augustine made the catechumens the focus of his remarks.

TRACTATE 3

In the rite of becoming a catechumen a cross was traced on the person's forehead. The cross, as Augustine repeatedly noted, defined the catechumens' status as public Christians. Goulven Madec has suggested that "Augustine speaks often of the sign of the cross on the forehead . . . in such realistic terms that one is led to think that this sign was the object of a painting or tattoo."[107] In his sermons

[105] *en. Ps.* 125.4 (CSEL 95.3:169); author's translation.

[106] Possidius, *Vita* 12 (Geerling, 46). Augustine himself mentions it several times: *ench.* 5.17; *s.* 198.45 (= *s. Dolbeau* 26).

[107] Madec, *Le Christ de saint Augustin*, 29.

Augustine often mentioned this "sacrament," as he called it, and did so for a variety of ends. Sometimes he stressed that the sign of the cross was no magical amulet, that its power flowed only if one's lifestyle and heart matched one's public status: "Many . . . find it easy to have Christ's sign on their forehead yet do not hospitably take Christ's word into their heart. Friends, I have said—and I repeat—Christ's sign evicts the [demonic] squatter only if our hearts have Christ as lodger."[108] At other times he appealed to the sign of the cross on the forehead as a way to admonish catechumens for their loose living:

> "Are you a catechumen?"
>
> "Yes, a catechumen."
>
> "Do you have one forehead to receive Christ's sign and another one to wear to the theater? So you want to go there? Then change foreheads before you go!"[109]

On still other occasions he used it in appeals to catechumens who were slow to answer his calls to submit their names for baptism. He argued that by the cross on the forehead they had become Christ's slaves and thus members of Christ's larger household; still, they could not enjoy the rights of freeborn children until they dropped their "heavy backpack of sins."[110] Most often, however, Augustine used this liturgical gesture to exhort catechumens and others not to be ashamed of the cross of Christ. He noted that people blushed when ashamed and that that blush was visible on the forehead:

> So far am I from blushing at the cross that I keep it, not in some hidden locale, but bear it on my forehead. Because our blushing shows on the forehead . . . [Christ] set disgrace itself—that which pagans mock—right on the spot of our shame. You have heard how people tease a shameless man—by saying: "He has no forehead." What

[108] *Io. eu. tr.* 50.2 (CCL 36:434); author's translation. See also *s.* 107.7.
[109] *s.* 301A.8 (= *s. Denis* 17; MA 1:89); author's translation. See also *en. Ps.* 50.1.
[110] *s.* 97A.3-4 (= *s. Casin*. II, 114; MA 1:417–18); author's translation.

> does this mean: "He has no forehead"? That he is shameless. Let me not have a bare forehead; let the cross of my Lord shield it.[111]

In *Tractate* 3, Augustine invoked this "sacrament" of the cross on the forehead to stress this latter idea: "We are Christian people . . . and if we are Christians, then by that very name we belong to Christ, whose sign we carry on our foreheads; if we also carry it in our hearts, then we are not ashamed of it. His sign is his humility."[112] In this case Augustine wanted to speak to the whole household of Christ, to catechumens and faithful alike. He thus did not invoke a symbol that could divide them—for instance, baptism or Eucharist—but rather chose one that united them—the cross on the forehead. This symbol signified both their solidarity and the humility of their path. And as he stressed here, it was a badge that needed not only to be worn boldly on the outside but also to be interiorized, to be taken to heart.

TRACTATE 4

In the middle of the next sermon Augustine raised a knotty problem: "And was there any need for the Lord to be baptized?" He then answered it with a string of rhetorical questions: "Was there any need for the Lord to be reborn? Any need for the Lord to be crucified? Any need for the Lord to be buried?"[113] The answer, Augustine argued, was Christ's self-emptying, at once an example and a saving action. He claimed that Christ's action had been subtly prophetic, that he had submitted to baptism to teach humility to one genus of catechumens, the ascetics. Augustine explained that one occasionally saw unusually ascetic catechumens. They had chosen celibacy; they had distributed their goods to the poor; they knew the intricacies of doctrine better than many faithful. Yet for all this they remained unbaptized. So Augustine played psychologist to lay bare what he took to be their hidden motives,

[111] *en. Ps.* 141.9 (CSEL 95.5:36); author's translation. See also *s.* 107.7, 218C.4 (= *s. Guelf.* 3); *Io. eu. tr.* 53.13; *en. Ps.* 68.1.12.

[112] *Io. eu. tr.* 3.2 (CCL 36:20); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:68.

[113] *Io. eu. tr.* 4.13 (CCL 36:37); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:95.

speaking in soliloquy, as though he himself were a catechumen of this sort:

> "What more am I going to receive? Look, here I am better than this or that baptized believer," thinking perhaps of baptized believers who are married or uneducated or hanging onto their own possessions, while he has already distributed his own to the poor; and he reckons that he is better than some guy who has already been baptized, and he refuses to come to baptism, saying, "I am just going to receive what this guy and that one already have"; and comparing himself in this way with people he scorns, he may think he will sully himself by receiving in this way what such riff-raff have received because he already thinks he is better than they are.[114]

This type of catechumen—however foreign to our experience—was not uncommon in that era. Augustine says that, in fact, "there may be some specially gifted catechumens in the church" that day who fit this description.[115] It was quite possible. The new religious hero of Augustine's age was the ascetic, the sort who flocked in large numbers to the Egyptian and Syrian wastes. We know that among these early monks were a certain number of catechumens.[116] Augustine detected in some of these ascetic catechumens the all-

[114] *Io. eu. tr.* 4.13 (CCL 36:37–38); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:96 (modified).

[115] *Io. eu. tr.* 4.13 (CCL 36:37); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:96. Augustine repeats this whole matter again in the next sermon, *Io. eu. tr.* 5.3. Why? It may have been simply his pedagogical habit of reviewing things, but it could also be because his target was still there in his audience and had not answered the call.

[116] Mention of catechumen-monks appears in early Egyptian monastic literature. In one of Pachomius's (rare) surviving letters, *ep.* 5, he calls on his monks to prepare the monk-catechumens for baptism at Easter. Pachomius's successor, Theodore, who came to lead the sprawling network of Pachomian monasteries, makes a similar mention of monk-catechumens (*ep.* 1.6). On this see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 127, 129. In *Catechesis* 4.24, Cyril of Jerusalem addresses monks present among his audience, but it is not clear whether these were baptized persons who happened to be attending or were numbered among those preparing for baptism; see also *Catechesis* 12.33.

too-human tendency to compare oneself to one's neighbors. Romans had a fierce sense of social class and typically held themselves aloof from lessers. It was precisely this psychology that Augustine's method flushed into the open. He then turned to his catechumens and exhorted those who saw their own attitudes played out in his little one-man play. He did not dispute that such a catechumen might possess a certain excellence, but it was a worthless one since "all his sins are still on his shoulders; unless he comes to the baptism of salvation where sins are absolved, he cannot, for all his superior excellence of character, enter the kingdom of heaven."[117]

TRACTATE 10

This sermon was given just a little before Lent. The reading that day described Jesus' cleansing of the temple. Augustine opened with an instruction on prayer, on cleansing the temple of the heart. He then stressed that laboring in this "temple" was not only interior; it was also communitarian. Zeal for God's house should consume his hearers as it had consumed Christ. So if they saw backsliders, he pleaded: "Hinder those you can, restrain those you can, frighten those you can, plead with those you can; but do not just sit back and keep quiet."[118] Augustine presumed that encouragement and exhortation were not his task alone. All were called to the task of teaching Gospel imperatives. In this context he turned to the catechumens. Playing off imagery from the gospel of the day, he made an appeal: "We are, fairly soon, going to celebrate the solemn annual festival of the pulling down and rebuilding of the temple; and I urge you, if any of you are catechumens, to prepare yourselves to receive God's grace. Now, yes, now is the time; now, yes, now are the labor pains being felt of what is then to be born."[119] The "solemn annual festival" here refers to Easter. Augustine uses the onset of

[117] *Io. eu. tr.* 4.13 (CCL 36:38); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:96.

[118] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.9 (CCL 36:106); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:206.

[119] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.10 (CCL 36:107); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:207 (modified). Some scholars have misunderstood Augustine here, presuming he was speaking only a few days before Easter. Poque has shown that Augustine's language

Lent as an occasion to begin to rally his catechumens, to get them to submit their names. Note his mention of "labor pains." Augustine often spoke of Lent as a time when the church was pregnant with catechumens whose birth would take place at Easter. Thus for him Lent means "labor pains" for the church as a whole and for those catechumens who submitted their names.

TRACTATE 11

In this sermon Augustine devoted his full attention to the catechumens. It was a Sunday—probably the first Sunday of Lent—in any case, the day he gave his annual appeal that they turn in their names. It happened that his verse-by-verse commentary on John had reached chapter 3, Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus. Augustine saw this coincidence of text and time of year as "fitting," as something "the Lord has arranged for us." He then explained: "So it was fitting that today you would hear from the gospel that 'unless you are born again of water and the Spirit, you will not see the kingdom of God.' For it is the time for me to plead with those of you who are still catechumens."[120] Augustine took the text quite literally: without baptism there could be no salvation. Thus he begged the catechumens to cease delaying and to receive the one thing that might save them. He compared them to people "carrying some heavy load of stone or wood." He thus exhorted catechumens to "hurry as fast as possible to put their burdens down. . . . [It] weighs heavy and makes one sink."[121]

As usual, Augustine focused on some knotty problem within the text of the day as the springboard for his remarks. In this case he noted John 2:23: that "many believed in [Jesus'] name" but "Jesus did not trust himself to them." It was the "mystery" of these words that allowed Augustine to interpret both the Nicodemus episode and the situation of his catechumens. He first noted that Nicodemus

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was formulaic: he was pleading that they turn in their names for the Lenten retreat. Poque, "Trois semaines de prédication," 175–83.

[120] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.1 (CCL 36:109); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:210.

[121] Ibid. This image of a heavy "backpack" of sins appears regularly in his appeals: *s.* 97A.3 (= *s. Casin*. II,114), 335H.3 (= *s. Lambot* 26).

had witnessed to his belief in the "name" by calling Jesus "rabbi." Catechumens too believed in the "name": "If we say to a catechumen, 'Do you believe in Christ?' he replies, 'I do believe,' and signs himself. He is now carrying the cross of Christ on his forehead, and he is not ashamed of his Lord's cross."[122] Because the cross on the forehead signified belief, catechumens thus matched the first phrase in John 2:23. Augustine then tried to show that they fit the second phrase as well. To do this, he cited their ignorance of sacraments: "Let us question him further: 'Do you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink the blood of the Son of man?' He does not know what we are talking about, because Jesus has not trusted himself to him."[123] Thus catechumens, like Nicodemus, were in the dark.

In the course of the sermon Augustine made appeal after appeal to the catechumens. He noted that the cross on the forehead was a sign they were slaves, not children: "Yes, the fact that catechumens have the sign of the cross on their foreheads means that they now belong to a great household; but let them, from being slaves, become sons."[124] Unlike children, slaves lacked inheritance rights; also unlike children, they did not have the run of the house. Only with baptism would they enjoy both. Later, Augustine used the *disciplina arcani* for a second appeal. He noted that the baptized had crossed the Red Sea and that "through baptism he brings believers across after slaying all their sins which were pursuing them like enemies—just as all the Egyptians perished in that sea." They too enjoyed "manna." Augustine then chided the catechumens: "Catechumens do not know what Christians receive! So let them blush red then, because they do not know; let them cross through the Red Sea, let them eat manna, in order that just as they have trusted in the name of Jesus, Jesus may entrust himself to them."[125] Finally, using a rhyming antithesis, he begged them to grasp the fullness of life that awaited them:

[122] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.3 (CCL 36:111); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:213.
[123] Ibid.
[124] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:214.
[125] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:215.

Non ex te ille maior,	He is not made greater because of you,
sed tu sine illo minor . . .	but you are less without him . . .
Reficieris si accesseris,	You will be remade if you come up,
deficies si recesseris.	you will be undone if you stay back.[126]

Over the course of this sermon Augustine touched on aspects of the theology of baptism. First, he noted why the Red Sea was red: it was "consecrated by Christ's blood."[127] Second, to explain Nicodemus's ignorance he contrasted baptismal birth with human birth (using first an alliterated chiasm, then rhyming antitheses):

Non noverat	He knew only
iste nisi unam nativitatem	that one birth
ex Adam et Eva;	from Adam and Eve;
ex Deo et ecclesia	[that] from God and church
nondum noverat;	he did not yet know.
non noverat nisi eos parentes	He knew only those parents
qui generat ad mortem;	who beget for death;
nondum noverat eos parentes	he did not know those parents
qui generat ad vitam;	who beget for life;
non noverat nisi eos parentes	he knew only those parents
qui generant successuros;	who beget heirs;
nondum noverat eos	he did not know those
qui semper viventes	who, living forever,
generant permansuros . . .	beget "everlasters." . . .
Vna est de terra,	One is from earth,
alia de caelo;	the other from heaven;
una est de carne,	one is from flesh,
alia de Spiritu;	the other from the Spirit;
una est de mortalitate,	one is from mortality,
alia de aeternitate;	the other from eternity;
una est de masculo et femina,	one is from male and female,
alia de Deo et ecclesia.	the other from God and church.[128]

[126] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.5 (CCL 36:113); author's translation.
[127] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:214.
[128] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.6 (CCL 36:113–14); author's translation.

Augustine used this series of antitheses, with its back-and-forth swings and singsong rhymes, to inscribe his ideas onto the catechumens' memory. Finally, to help them rebut Donatist polemics Augustine gave this two-births motif a further wrinkle: just as "Adam cannot father me again," so "Christ cannot once again give birth to me. Just as the womb cannot be repeated, so neither can baptism."[129]

TRACTATE 12

Augustine gave this sermon a few days after *Tractate* 11, just as the routine of Lent was getting underway. In opening, he noted with pleasure the unusually large and excited crowd in church. He took advantage of this to make one last appeal to the catechumens—apparently to round up any last-minute stragglers: "I urged and still urge our brothers and sisters the catechumens. . . . Let them be reborn of water and the Spirit; let the church who is pregnant with them bring them forth. They have been conceived, let them be brought forth into the light; there are breasts to suckle them, they need have no fear of being suffocated when they are born; let them not withdraw from the mother's breasts."[130] Augustine here draws out at greater length the labor/birth imagery. The rite of becoming a catechumen was, as he saw it, the moment of conception. Their time as catechumens had been part of a long pregnancy, but with Lent that pregnancy would come to a climax. Baptism at Easter would signal their being "brought forth into the light." Augustine knew well of ancient practices of abortion and infanticide and insisted here that the church as mother was very different and it never "suffocated" its newborns.[131] As

[129] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.6 (CCL 36:114); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:217.

[130] *Io. eu. tr.* 12.3 (CCL 36:121); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:230 (modified). Poque, "Trois semaines de prédication," 76, notes subtle shifts in Augustine's vocabulary between *Io. eu. tr.* 10 and 11: "as if there was, from one sermon to the next, a subtraction of a certain number of catechumens and that the second sermon addresses itself as though to the remainder, to those 'who are *still* catechumens' "; and between *Io. eu. tr.* 11 and 12: "The exhortation is presented (in the past tense) as a past fact that he returns to."

[131] On abortion and infanticide in the ancient world see Paul Veyne, *A History of Private Life*, vol. 1, *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, and

we will see in the next chapter, this labor/birth imagery would be a guiding thread for his Lenten catechesis.

THEATER OF THE WORD

In the last two chapters I have covered much ground. It seems a good moment, therefore, to draw together the major threads. First, Augustine's classroom was his basilica; here the rhythms of education moved to the rhythms of the liturgy itself. Every gesture, every sign, every word mattered—whether ritual greetings, sitting-and-standing arrangements, the cross people "wore" on their foreheads, or the secrecy of what followed dismissal. All these, Augustine insisted, held some import for how one believed, felt, and acted. In this classroom silence was rare; instead, the atmosphere was rowdy, emotionally charged, more like that of a sports arena than a modern church. It offered entertainment as well as instruction, theatrics as well as worship: its drama was salvation history; its script was the Scriptures; its actors included everyone.

It was in this milieu that Augustine held his catechumenate. Here catechumens mixed with baptized, penitents, and outsiders. Here they heard sermons that were substantive, frequent (four times a week or more), and lengthy (sometimes an hour or longer). Here Augustine improvised his lessons, guiding their flow as much by the outcries of his hearers as by the inspiration he drew from the text in his hand. He believed that as preacher he could not merely instruct; he also had to tantalize and humor, to chide and encourage, for what mattered was not simply changed minds but changed hearts and changed lives. Certainly he attended to the understanding. In fact, he would not move to his next point until satisfied that those who walked a little slower, whether catechumens or the poorly educated, understood. He worried less about the architecture of the whole, whether an individual sermon or a series of them, than he did about each sentence he spoke. Each

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London: Belknap Press, 1992), 9–12. In discussing Ps 26:10 ("My father and mother have abandoned me, but the Lord has taken me up"), Augustine in *en. Ps.* 45.11 contrasts God's care with parents who abandon or expose their infant.

morsel mattered: that its images be potent enough, that its sounds be musical enough. The thought he used in this forum was more poetic than philosophical; it moved more by association than by logical rigor. He withheld from the catechumens nothing of his most daring thought, whether subtle views on human interiority, the generation of the Word, or divine omnipresence, but he always sought ways to wrap such thinking in some memorable garb. For this he tapped into his repertoire of rhetorical techniques: analogies, paradoxes, *double entendre*s, soliloquies, rhyming antitheses. Despite this, he insisted that rhetorical finesse was a tool, not an end; what mattered was food, not spice.

Scripture was his catechumenate's textbook. It structured everything: whether individual sermons or a whole sequence, whether the mood he evoked or the very language he used. He usually focused on small fragments—single verses, even single words—presuming that within such minutiae were hidden a microcosm that hinted at a larger whole. He certainly analyzed, but his analyses resembled a poet's more than a biblical scholar's. Like a poet he mined Scripture's images, melted them down, and refitted them for new settings. And while he certainly explained, he did not explain away, for he preferred Scripture's rich ambiguities. He enjoyed the way its images and music allowed him to elide a cluster of meanings, sentiments, and attitudes into an imaginative whole. He focused especially on scriptural images that lay close to the catechumens' experience: seafaring, highway bandits, and harvesters' songs. Scripture's music became a favored pedagogical tool, whether the psalms the catechumens and faithful had sung or the melodies of his own Scripture-laced words.

The intertwining sequence on John and the Psalms offers intriguing indications of Augustine's approach to a curriculum for catechumens. He seems to have preferred depth to breadth: with three chapters of John and fifteen psalms he could get across enough of what was vital. By intertwining the two biblical books he set up an unusual contrapuntal effect. In the sermons on the Psalms he worked to educate the catechumens' hearts—encouraging a journey at once inward and upward. In the sermons on John he focused on educating the catechumens' minds—but the intellectualism he

used was less that of an academic theologian and more that of a courtroom lawyer unraveling knotty problems. Without trying to be systematic, he nonetheless interwove Christology with ecclesiology, pneumatology with spirituality, doctrine with moral admonition. Without violating the *disciplina arcani*, he gave the catechumens much on baptism: that sins drowned in its Red Sea; that like physical birth it was unrepeatable; that ultimately the true baptizer was not the minister but Christ the giver of the growth; that by baptism one joined the freeborn heirs who enjoyed the run of the Lord's house.

Still, Augustine offered his catechumens no illusions about the church. It was an ark full of ravens and doves, an inn for lifelong convalescents, yet at its best it was full of mountain climbers who descended to nurse the lowly and do justice for the indigent. Through the whole sequence Christ remained the center appearing in many guises: the inner teacher and inner listener, the road builder and storm calmer, the Word who creates from within the fabric of creation and the undercurrent of history hidden in strange names and numbers. Christ appeared especially as the self-emptier: the Lamb whose death kills the lion, the mountain that becomes a valley, the King who makes himself the royal road, the plague doctor who makes himself the medicine. This sequence, I grant, illustrates only some of what Augustine did over a short period of time with one cohort of catechumens. Still, it at least gives us some sense of the range, depth, and tenor of teachings to which he would expose catechumens.

In the end, Augustine's catechumenate suffered the same struggles that beset those of his contemporaries: he, too, had lax catechumens who preferred cheering to changing; he, too, had zealous catechumens who measured spiritual progress more by culture and class than by the Gospel; he, too, had procrastinating catechumens more daunted by high baptismal standards than by threats of hellfire. It does not seem they lacked understanding—except, of course, about sacraments. The deeper problem seems to have been the lack of a humane remedy for post baptismal failures. Neither Augustine nor his contemporaries, for all their pedagogical gifts, created a penitential process that could alleviate such fears. Both he and they seem to have let the Gospel view of baptism as

new creation overwhelm the Gospel message of mercy. Given this, Augustine struggled to meet his own criterion for successful education: persuasion. Year after year he had a measured success, even with his high standards, for year after year, despite obstacles and fears, catechumens continued to turn in their names for baptism.

Chart 6

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Text & Order

Sermon	Text	Translation	Scripture	Turn to Catechumens
A. Sequence begins in early December (probably 406)				
Exposition of Psalm 119	CSEL 95.3: 37–57	WSA III/19: 488–509	Psalm 119	
Exposition of Psalm 120	CSEL 95.3: 57–83	WSA III/19: 510–26	Psalm 120	
Tractate on Gospel of John 1	CCL 36: 1–11	WSA III/12: 39–54	John 1:1-5	‡
Exposition of Psalm 121	CSEL 95.3: 83–107	WSA III/20: 13–28	Psalm 121	
Tractate on Gospel of John 2	CCL 36: 11–19	WSA III/12: 55–67	John 1:6-14	
Exposition of Psalm 122	CSEL 95.3: 107–27	WSA III/20: 29–42	Psalm 122	
Exposition of Psalm 123	CSEL 95.3: 128–46	WSA III/20: 43–55	Psalm 123	
Tractate on Gospel of John 3	CCL 36: 20–31	WSA III/12: 68–85	John 1:15-18	X
Exposition of Psalm 124	CSEL 95.3: 146–62	WSA III/20: 56–67	Psalm 124	
Exposition of Psalm 125	CSEL 95.3: 162–84	WSA III/20: 68–82	Psalm 125	
Tractate on Gospel of John 4	CCL 36: 31–40	WSA III/12: 86–100	John 1:19-23	X
Exposition of Psalm 126	CSEL 95.3: 185–206	WSA III/20: 83–97	Psalm 126	
Tractate on Gospel of John 5	CCL 36: 40–53	WSA III/12: 101–20	John 1:33	X
Tractate on Gospel of John 6	CCL 36: 53–67	WSA III/12: 121–44	John 1:32-33	
Exposition of Psalm 127	CSEL 95.3: 206–30	WSA III/20: 98–115	Psalm 127	
Tractate on Gospel of John 7	CCL 36: 67–81	WSA III/12: 145–67	John 1:34-51	‡
Exposition of Psalm 128	CSEL 95.3: 231–48	WSA III/20: 116–26	Psalm 128	
Exposition of Psalm 129	CSEL 95.3: 248–65	WSA III/20: 127–37	Psalm 129	

Chart 6—Cont'd

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Text & Order

Sermon	Text	Translation	Scripture	Turn to Catechumens
Tractate on Gospel of John 8	CCL 36: 81–90	WSA III/12: 168–82	John 2:1-4	
Tractate on Gospel of John 9	CCL 36: 90–100	WSA III/12: 183–96	John 2:1-11	
Tractate on Gospel of John 10	CCL 36: 100–09	WSA III/12: 197–209	John 2:12-21	X
Exposition of Psalm 130	CSEL 95.3: 265–90	WSA III/20: 138–54	Psalm 130	
Exposition of Psalm 131	CSEL 95.3: 290–318	WSA III/20: 155–74	Psalm 131	
Exposition of Psalm 95	CCL 39: 1342–53	WSA III/18: 423–37	Psalm 95	
B. Beginning of Lent (probably 407)				
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	CCL 36: 109–20	WSA III/12: 210–27	John 2:23–3:5	X
Exposition of Psalms 132 & 133	CSEL 95.3: 319–40	WSA III/20: 175–89	Psalms 132 & 133	
Tractate on Gospel of John 12	CCL 36: 120–29	WSA III/12: 228–41	John 3:6-21	X
C. Easter Week				
Tractate on 1st Letter of John 1–6	SC 75: 112–310	WSA III/14: 21–103	1 John 1:1–4:3	Neophytes
(possibly also 7–8)	SC 75: 314–70	WSA III/14: 104–30	1 John 4:4-16	
D. After Easter Week				
Tractate on 1st Letter of John 9–10	SC 75: 314–438	WSA III/14: 131–58	1 John 4:17–5:3	
Tractate on Gospel of John 13	CCL 36: 129–41	WSA III/12: 242–49	John 3:22-29	X
Tractate on Gospel of John 14–16	CCL 36: 141–69	WSA III/12: 260–304	John 3:29–4:53	

‡ : Reference to catechumens implied.

Chart 7

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Topics

Sermon	Topics Covered
Exposition of Psalm 119	"Song of Steps": ascent of the heart; Christ as mountain and valley; Jacob's ladder; the motherly Christ; conversion; arrows of God; true singing as tears and virtuous action; polemic against the Donatists; not seek to separate wheat and chaff
Exposition of Psalm 120	Ascent of the heart; good works as sowing seed in winter; Christ quells the storm in the heart; grammar: Pasch as "Passover" not "Passion"; knotty problem: "hand of your right hand"; St. Crispina; spiritual intoxication
Tractate on Gospel of John 1	Evangelist John as mountain; the birth of the Word; Christ the inner teacher; baptism as re-creation by the Word; story of the Manichee and the flies; God as creator; analogy of the carpenter; analogy of the physician
Exposition of Psalm 121	Two commandments as wings of the soul; sighing for Jerusalem; analogy of festival of martyrs; the temple of living stones; Christ as the Samaritan; plea to the rich to do justice; drinking the word of God
Tractate on Gospel of John 2	Sailing home on the wood of the cross; God as creator: the carpenter analogy revisited; divine adoption vs. human; Christ the doctor heals eyes of the heart
Exposition of Psalm 122	Descent of Christ the Head, ascent of the Body of Christ; heaven not place; being a son and being a servant; polemic against pursuit of money, fame, power, self-righteousness
Exposition of Psalm 123	Psalms as songs and sentiments of Christ and his Body; psalms as mirror; King of country is the Road to it; grammar: translation into Punic; the shipwreck of riches; Christ breaks the snares of the fowlers
Tractate on Gospel of John 3	Preaching: a rain of exhortations; the Cross on the forehead; grace and the Law; Christ the doctor; the image of God in the mind; knotty problem: grace for grace; Christ the inner teacher
Exposition of Psalm 124	Allegory: the mountains beyond Jerusalem; putting up with unrighteous rulers; "City of God is the people of God"; unlike the Donatists, "Be Israel"

Chart 7—Cont'd

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Topics

Sermon	Topics Covered
Exposition of Psalm 125	Christ as redeemer from slavery; groaning of the people of God; conversion: God turns us around; the Spirit as a hot southern wind; good works as sowing in winter; church as inn of the Samaritan
Tractate on Gospel of John 4	Christ the quiet Judge and loud Teacher; knotty problem: the contradiction between the words of Christ and of John the Baptist; the proud catechumen; polemic against the Donatists; call to mull over knotty problem
Exposition of Psalm 126	"Song of Steps" by Solomon; preaching: the inner teacher; people of God: wheat & chaff; bishop as overseer of assembly and one with assembly; Eve from Adam, church from Christ; the resurrection; the church groans to give birth; obscurity of Scripture
Tractate on Gospel of John 5	Christ as Truth, John the Baptist as truthful; Christ the baptizer and the baptized; polemic against the Donatists: the minister and power of baptism, sinful ministers; solution to knotty problem: what John learned from the dove
Tractate on Gospel of John 6	Love as moaning of the dove; allegory of Noah's two birds: dove and raven; polemic against the Donatists: the tattoo of the deserter; against the circumcellions
Exposition of Psalm 127	Problem: does a psalm about wife and children apply to all?; prophets speak in enigmas; digression: Christ as Head & Body; Felix the martyr; "clean fear" of God; loving Christ; church as wife and children; the Lord's hunger for good deeds
Tractate on Gospel of John 7	Pagan vs. Christian spectacles; the dangerous Lamb of God; the Son as lawyer; polemic against the use of charms and amulets; the kenosis of Christ, of Paul, of preachers
Exposition of Psalm 128	Dancing to the rhythm of the commandments; the evils of the church today not as bad as in past; the demands of Christ easier than those of money; creation's praise of God; against usury
Exposition of Psalm 129	Praying in the depths; a merciful God; bear burdens: image of the stags; pardoned, yet waiting for the kingdom; martyrs as models

Chart 7—Cont'd

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Topics

Sermon	Topics Covered
Tractate on Gospel of John 8	Water into wine: everyday miracles, Christ's renewal of us; divine and human in Jesus; the two births of Jesus: Son of the Father, Son of Mary; polemic against astrologers and Manichees
Tractate on Gospel of John 9	Defense of marriage; the intoxication of the Scriptures; theology of the Spirit; allegory: the six jars of wine as the six ages of salvation; the meaning of Adam's name
Tractate on Gospel of John 10	Prayer and Christ the inner Teacher; the "brothers" of Jesus; corrupt bishops; duty of community admonition; first appeal to catechumens; the meaning of Adam's name and the 46 years of building the temple
Exposition of Psalm 130	Review: Head & Body; sinning as weaving a whip of cords; singing with the heart; Paul on the body of Christ; Christ the doctor; John 1:1 as "bread" vs. John 1:14 as "milk"; divinization; avoid literalism; wheat & chaff
Exposition of Psalm 131	Interpretation: seek mysteries; against private possessions; entertaining Christ; tent of God & house of God; putting on Christ
Exposition of Psalm 95	Singing as building the temple; Christ beyond the Roman Empire; Donatists build walls not temple; God beyond word; bringing a contrite spirit; Donatists as frogs; mystical name of Adam; Christ the artist; offerings to Christ the Judge
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	Appeal to the catechumens to enroll for baptism; knotty problem: Why does Christ not trust catechumens?; Nicodemus the catechumen; baptism and the Red Sea; the two births; polemic against the Donatists: birth is unrepeatable; allegory: the patriarchs
Exposition of Psalms 132 &133	Celebrate unity; monks vs. circumcellions; allegory: Noah, Daniel, Job; *Deo gratias* vs. *Deo laudes*; St. Stephen; murmurers
Tractate on Gospel of John 12	Greets excited crowd; final appeal to the catechumens; role of preacher; born of water and Spirit; voice of the Spirit; two births of Christ and ours; Paul against the Donatists; Christ the doctor; call to repentance; sin as bilge water; daily preaching as discipline

Chart 8

The Sequence on the Psalms and John: Intertwining Themes

Sermon	Links between Exp of Ps and Tract on Jn	Chronological Reference
Exposition of Psalm 119	—	—
Exposition of Psalm 120	4: "mountains"	13: St. Crispina, Dec. 5; cf. Tr. 1.6: Ps "sang a little while ago"
Tractate on Gospel of John 1	2-3: "mountains"	A Sunday (cf. Tr. 2.1)
Exposition of Psalm 121	5-6: "the same"	Vigil of Tractate 2 (cf. 1)
Tractate on Gospel of John 2	2: "the same"; 16: promises to speak of "grace and truth"	16: promises Tractate 3 in a little while
Exposition of Psalm 122	—	—
Exposition of Psalm 123	14: renews promise to speak of "grace and truth"	—
Tractate on Gospel of John 3	1: recalls promise of "grace and truth" and fulfills it	—
Exposition of Psalm 124	5: "sparrow in the mountains"	—
Exposition of Psalm 125	(This may come here or after Tractate 4)	—
Tractate on Gospel of John 4	11: "sparrow in the mountains"; 16: poses problem of "dove"	—
Exposition of Psalm 126	13: recalls promise to explain the "dove"	13: Vigil of Tractate 5
Tractate on Gospel of John 5	1: completes promise to explain the "dove"	17: early January (New Year's?)
Tractate on Gospel of John 6	19: "olive in ark"	1: "cold outside"
Exposition of Psalm 127	13: recalls "olive"	6: St. Felix [of Nola? Jan. 6]
Tractate on Gospel of John 7	10-11: the "jurist"	24: Sunday
Exposition of Psalm 128	—	—
Exposition of Psalm 129	4: the "jurist"	—
Tractate on Gospel of John 8	—	13: Tractate 9, tomorrow
Tractate on Gospel of John 9	14: "ADAM"	1: Tractate 8, day before

Chart 8—Cont'd

The Sequence on the Psalms & John: Intertwining Themes

Sermon	Links between Exp of Ps and Tract on Jn	Chronological Reference
Tractate on Gospel of John 10	12: "ADAM"; 5: "scourge of rope"	—
Exposition of Psalm 130	2: "scourge of rope"	—
Exposition of Psalm 131	—	—
Exposition of Psalm 95	13: "olive in ark"; 15: "ADAM"	15: Mentioned "ADAM" "a little while ago": Tractate 9.10
Tractate on Gospel of John 11	—	1: Sunday (cf. Tractate 12.1), probably on or before 1st Sunday of Lent
Exposition of Psalms 132 &133	6: "pool" = unity	—
Tractate on Gospel of John 12	9: "pool" = unity	3: third appeal to catechumens
Tractate on 1st Letter of John 1–6	Prologue: notes cycle on John's Gospel interrupted (cf. Tractate 13)	Prologue: Easter Week

Chart from Maurice LeLandais, "Deux années de prédication de saint Augustin," *Études augustiniennes* (1953), 35; see 15–26.

CHAPTER 6

Lent: Time in the Womb

Each year a certain number of catechumens would take the momentous step of petitioning for baptism. Some responded to Augustine's personal appeals: that "our friendship may be true and everlasting, and that it will unite us not only to each other but also to the Lord."[1] Others witnessed a miraculous healing or experienced a great vision and so were moved to turn in their names. In his treatise *On the Care of the Dead* (*De cura pro mortuis gerenda*), Augustine cites the case of Curma, a poor magistrate from the town of Tullium, located not far from Hippo. This "simple country fellow" had fallen into a coma and "lay almost dead for some days." During this time he had visions of the dead (such as his namesake, Curma the smith) and the living (such as Augustine himself); he also had a vision in which he was "led into Paradise and was told . . . 'Go be baptized if you wish to be in this place of the blessed.' "[2] So he, like others from the surrounding villages, would make their way to Hippo near the beginning of Lent. They would find somewhere to lodge and stay on for about two months, through the forty days of Lent, through the Vigil and Easter Week, until they had at last "fulfilled the duties of the Easter season."

[1] *ep.* 258.4-5 (CSEL 57:609–10); trans. Teske, WSA II/4:196. This letter was addressed to a catechumen named Marcianus to convince him to "submit your name to be listed among the *competentes*."

[2] *cura mort.* 12.15 (CSEL 41:644–46); trans. John Lacy, *Saint Augustine: Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, FOTC 27:370–72. On this work see Martin Klöckener, "Cura pro mortuis gerenda (De-)," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 182–87. For an account of a miraculous healing, prompting a catechumen to turn in his name for baptism see *ep.* 227.

These country folk would gather with catechumens from Augustine's home church. All told, there would be enough of a crowd that Curma, "like many others," might remain "unknown to us."[3] As Augustine saw it, these catechumens had heard the voice of their own hearts speak in the opening verse of Psalm 41: "As the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God." And so with thirsty hearts they would "rush headlong to the grace of the holy font."[4]

During Lent these "petitioners" (*competentes*) went through training that included three elements: (i) a penitential discipline, (ii) scrutiny and exorcisms, (iii) a mix of public and private catecheses. Our knowledge of this formation is fragmentary. Some fragments offer rich, detailed glimpses into the shape of the training and catechesis; others give us only the floor plan of Augustine's catechetical edifice, one whose interior and ornaments can only be guessed at. In this chapter I will gather these fragments under five headings. I open with an examination of the treatise *On Faith and Works*, in which Augustine speaks—often in passing—about the contours and guiding principles for the Lenten training. Then I will focus on four groups of catecheses: on the discipline and meaning of Lent (*Sermons* 205–210); on the scrutiny (*Sermon* 216); on the creed (*Sermons* 212–215, *On the Symbol*); and on the Lord's Prayer (*Sermons* 56–59).

THE CROSS-WEAVE OF FAITH AND WORKS

Around 413, Augustine received some books written by "laypeople . . . schooled in the divine Scriptures."[5] They questioned both standards for admission to baptism and the legitimacy of the traditional prebaptismal training. These people were moved, in part, by pastoral concerns. They questioned why both male catechumens with mistresses and divorced-and-remarried people were barred from baptism.[6] They buttressed their arguments with an

[3] *cura mort.* 12.15 (CSEL 41:646); trans. Lacy, FOTC 27:372.
[4] *en. Ps.* 41.1 (CCL 38:460); author's translation.
[5] *retr.* 2.38 (65) (CCL 57:121); trans. Ramsey, WSA I/2:145. See *f. et op.* 1.1-2.
[6] *f. et op.* 1.1-2 (CSEL 41:35–37).

array of biblical texts that seemed to undermine the foundational principles on which both the catechumenate and the Lenten training had been built: namely, that formation involved *both* faith and morals; that it demanded long, concerted effort; and that it required the reform of the whole person. They cited stories from the Acts of the Apostles that showed that the apostles themselves had baptized their hearers after a simple declaration of faith, for example, Peter's baptism of the three thousand and Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. They also appealed to the great Old Testament type of baptism, the Exodus, and noted that the Jewish people had passed through the Red Sea *before* receiving the Law. These critics suggested that it might be more biblical for the church to teach *competentes* only what was necessary for "faith," in other words, dogmatic truths. They felt that if these dogmas were accepted, then the church should baptize; only afterward should it teach the moral life required of Christians.

Augustine answered these objections with the treatise *On Faith and Works* (*De fide et operibus*).[7] He admitted these people showed "commendable charity," but he feared that their views, if accepted, would "have everyone admitted to baptism indiscriminately."[8] He saw them as good-hearted extremists whose laxity betokened a loss of balance as perilous as that of rigorists whose praise of virginity and abstemious ways led them to condemn marriage and moderate wine drinking.[9] Augustine insisted that orthodoxy was a balancing act and that on this question of baptism the Christian

[7] See Volker Henning Drecoll, "Fide et operibus (De -)," *Aug-Lex* 2 (1996–2002): 1306–11.

[8] *f. et op.* 15.25 (CSEL 41:65); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:243.

[9] *f. et op.* 4.5 (CSEL 41:40–41). It is not clear which rigorists Augustine has in mind: perhaps local ascetics; perhaps reports he has heard about monks in Egypt; perhaps Jerome, who notoriously proclaimed that the sole value of marriage was that it produced virgins. Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 45–62, argues that Augustine's defense of marriage, *De bono coniugale* (*On the Good of Marriage*) should have been titled "Against Jerome." See also David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 269–84.

teacher should "neither become numbed in the name of patience nor rage under the pretext of zeal."[10] So he tried to answer his opponents and discuss "not only how those who have been regenerated by the grace of Christ ought to live but also what sort of people should be admitted to the bath of regeneration."[11] He took pains to defend the traditional formation against the charge that it might somehow be unbiblical. He thus spent the greater part of the treatise refuting his opponents' exegeses. He insisted, for example, that Peter had told the three thousand to do penance; that the Jewish people, in leaving Egypt, had left behind their sinful ways; and that Scripture had simply passed over in silence the Ethiopian eunuch's baptismal formation.[12] What especially bothered Augustine was the glib separation his opponents made between faith and morals. He retorted that Paul did not separate things this way, and that it would be absurd to suggest that those portions of Paul's letters focused on faith were addressed to catechumens and *competentes* while those on morals were directed to the baptized.[13] Against this Augustine insisted that faith was much more than assent to doctrines: that faith, as understood by Paul and by the long tradition of the church, had always been "a faith 'laboring in love.'"[14]

This treatise contains much on a Scripture-based rationale for the catechumenate and Lenten training and little on the shape these actually took in Augustine's day. Yet here and there points can be gleaned. In chapter 4, I cited his passing remarks on the long

[10] *f. et op.* 5.7 (CSEL 41:43); author's translation.

[11] *retr.* 2.38 (65) (CCL 57:121); trans. Ramsey, WSA I/2:145. Augustine summarizes *f. et op.* in other works of his because he believed it addressed crucial issues: *ench.* 18.67; *ep.* 205.18; *Dulc. qu.* 1.2.

[12] *f. et op.* 8.12-13; 11.17; 9.14 (CSEL 41:48–50, 54–57, 50–52).

[13] *f. et op.* 7.11 (CSEL 41:46–48). His opponents had noted that Paul's letters typically closed with paraenetic sections; they thus claimed that the doctrinal body was directed at those preparing for baptism while the latter portions were for the baptized.

[14] *f. et op.* 25.46 (CSEL 41:91); author's translation. Augustine is quoting Gal 5:6. In *ench.* 18.67 he refers to this point as the heart of the treatise's whole argument.

catechumenate phase. One finds more information, though in rather piecemeal form, on the training during Lent. First, there is a matter of vocabulary. Augustine consistently distinguished ordinary catechumens from those who had put in their names for baptism. He referred to the latter either as *baptizandi* ("those to be baptized") or as *competentes* ("petitioners"). One finds this same distinction in his sermons.[15]

Second, Augustine implied that "during the days for harvesting this grace" the church investigated the lifestyle of those who had "given in their names."[16] Egeria, as we saw in chapter 1, described a solemn, formal rite in which this was done: on the first day of Lent the bishop investigated each candidate's lifestyle by questioning sponsors and neighbors. Augustine makes no explicit mention of such a rite, but it is clear that there was some procedure for barring unworthy candidates. Nor is there any mention of questioning sponsors or neighbors. At some point the candidates themselves formally declared their resolve to live a life worthy of a Christian. Here and there Augustine alludes to certain criteria. Candidates agreed to live only with "their true and legitimate wives."[17] Also "prostitutes and actors and public sinners of any other kind are not allowed to come to the Christian sacraments without first breaking away or freeing themselves from those attachments."[18] Finally, "drunkards and avaricious persons and slanderers" are to have their vices "strongly condemned in the admonitions and the catechetical instructions" and be admitted only if they "do so with a reformed attitude." The investigator must "not admit to the reception of baptism those who resist and declare that they will continue

[15] The term "*baptizandi*" appears in *f. et op.* 7.11, 8.13, 11.17, 13.19, and 20.36; "*competentes*," in *f. et op.* 6.9, 18.33, and 19.35. This distinction between ordinary catechumens and *competentes* is made especially in *s.* 392.1; also *s.* 216.1, 228.1, 229.1.

[16] *f. et op.* 6.8 (CSEL 41:43); author's translation.

[17] *f. et op.* 6.8 (CSEL 41:43); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:231.

[18] *f. et op.* 18.33 (CSEL 41:78); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:250. Here it is not perfectly clear whether Augustine is referring to a Lenten interrogation or the interrogation on entrance to the catechumenate itself, but he explicitly remarks that such vices are to be denounced during Lenten catecheses.

in those sins."[19] Should someone be barred, it was not a matter of preventing willing candidates from coming; rather, it was simply taking people at their own word: "We are only convicting of guilt those who, by their own public statements, do not want to go to Christ."[20]

Third, Augustine listed prominent landmarks within the geography of Lent. He noted that people were "purified by continence, fasting and exorcisms"; later he says that they were "catechized and exorcised and examined."[21] Similar summaries appear in Augustine's Easter sermons. In *Sermon* 227 he mentions "the humbling fast and the sacrament of exorcism"; in *Sermon* 229 he says that, after people had "given in their names," a "milling" process began "with fasts and exorcisms"; in *Sermon* 229A he reminds them that "you underwent [a sort of milling] by fasts, by observances, by all-night vigils, by exorcisms."[22] Later in this chapter we will see more precisely what Augustine meant by "fasts," "observances," "examinations," and "exorcisms." Yet these lists are revealing: ascetical practices and exorcisms are cited in each case, while catechesis is mentioned only once. Perhaps Augustine was taking catechesis for granted and wanted to stress elements that made the Lenten training distinctive. On the other hand, it may indicate priorities. Asceticism and exorcism may have served as the centerpiece of the curriculum while catechesis, though still an element, may have played a subsidiary role.

Fourth, Augustine alluded to emphases in Lenten catechesis. In rebutting these opponents he stressed the role of moral instruction, that "anyone catechizing someone before baptism has the duty to teach and advise about morals."[23] He cited his own practice: no matter who his audience might be, he always joined doctrine with moral admonition; while theological teachings tended to come

[19] *f. et op.* 18.33 (CSEL 41:78); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:250–51.

[20] *f. et op.* 17.31 (CSEL 41:75); author's translation.

[21] *f. et op.* 6.8-9 (CSEL 41:43–44); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:231.

[22] *s.* 227, 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6), 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7) (PL 38:1100; MA 1:30, 463); author's translation.

[23] *f. et op* . 13.19 (CSEL 41:59); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:240.

first and moral instructions second, "sound and responsible teaching usually requires that both be preached in the cross-weave of a single discourse." Since most audiences had a mixture of catechumens and baptized, this was an "instruction" for the catechumens and a "reminder" for the baptized.[24] This "cross-weave" of doctrine and moral admonition followed the Gospel's own cross-weave: "The two are connected, because there cannot be love of God in someone who does not love his neighbor, and there cannot be love of his neighbor in someone who does not love God."[25]

Fifth, Augustine describes the emotionally charged atmosphere of Lent:

> Do we silence the testimony of our own experience, do we go so far as to forget how intent, how anxious, we were over what the catechists taught us when we were petitioning for the sacrament of the font—and for that very reason were called "petitioners" (*competentes*)? Do we not notice how others who, year after year, race to the bath of rebirth, do we not see how they act during the days they are being catechized and exorcised and scrutinized—how sharp-eyed they look when gathering, with what eagerness they move along, with what care, what suspense, they hang upon it all?[26]

Eagerness and anxiety, an edgy suspense and a sharp-eyed intensity—it was this heady mix of emotions that Augustine had felt as a petitioner and had observed year after year in his work as a catechist. This affective sensitivity is typical Augustine. And as we will see, it was to exactly such feelings that he pitched his own Lenten sermons, sometimes further fueling enthusiasms, at other times dampening them, sometimes confirming fears, at other times quelling and soothing them.

Finally, Augustine gave what he saw as the bottom line: that people must already have embarked on a "life resonating in harmony with sacred baptism."[27] Lent was thus *the* time for *competentes*

[24] *f. et op* . 7.11 (CSEL 41:48); author's translation.
[25] *f. et op.* 13.20 (CSEL 41:60); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:241.
[26] *f. et op.* 6.9 (CSEL 41:44); author's translation.
[27] *f. et op.* 26.48 (CSEL 41:93); author's translation.

to hone their skills, to plot out "a way of life that squares with the great sacrament they yearn to receive."[28] Following Paul's admonition, they were to strip off the old and put on the new; following Christ's, they were not to patch new cloth on old garb or pour new wine into old wineskins. Still—Augustine admitted—neither inquiries into lifestyle nor well-aimed catechesis nor demanding asceticism offered any guarantee. Inevitably, some less-than-worthy candidates slipped through.[29] What is more, on this side of the eschaton the church was inevitably a mix of wheat and chaff, an ark full of animals both clean and unclean, a good net catching bad fish as well as good.[30] These realities, however inevitable, should be no reason that the "strict and careful discipline should be entirely relaxed or abandoned."[31] For Augustine and his contemporaries the rigorist legacy of the third century and the memory of martyrs' heroics still loomed large. Augustine shared the tradition's awe of baptism and of the new life it promised. But he had begun to edge—in carefully measured ways—toward a church of the many, with all the uneasy compromises that entailed. While he saw his unnamed opponents as radical laxists, he found himself equally repelled by other currents, notably the Pelagians and their elitist attitudes and ascetical optimism.[32]

[28] *f. et op.* 6.9 (CSEL 41:44); author's translation.

[29] *f. et op.* 19.35 (CSEL 41:80–81).

[30] *f. et op.* 27.49, 17.31-32 (CSEL 41:95–96, 74–78).

[31] *f. et op.* 2.3 (CSEL 41:37); trans. Kearney, WSA I/8:227.

[32] On Pelagius and his circle, the classic study is by Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (1968; reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); for a brief overview see Mathijs Lamberigts, "Pelagius and Pelagians," 258–79 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); on his aristocratic social milieu see Peter Brown, "Pelagius and His Supporters: Aims and Environment," 183–207 in his *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (reprint Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007). On Augustine's role in the anti-Pelagian controversy see Serge Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 325–65, 413–38; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 340–77, 383–410, 465–68, 491–93. On Augustine's theology of grace and predestination see J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative*

BOOT CAMP: THE LENTEN DISCIPLINE

During Lent, *competentes* embraced a strict ascetical regimen. According to Augustine they were expected to fast each day until the "ninth hour" (around 3 p.m.).[33] They also abstained from all meat and wine and kept their diet bland and simple.[34] On Sundays and on Holy Thursday the fast was lifted, while on Holy Saturday it was tightened so that they, together with all the faithful, would take neither food nor drink.[35] The *competentes*, if married, were strictly enjoined to fast from sex.[36] They also distributed alms to the poor and, on occasion, spent all night praying.[37] The *competentes* were not the only ones who followed these disciplines. According to Augustine, "almost all do during Lent, to the extent that anyone wants to do or can do more or less."[38] Nor were *competentes* allowed to bathe. This meant not only physical discomfort; it also meant distancing oneself from the public baths, one of the great

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Grace, CEASA 82 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980); James Wetzel, "Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," 124–41 in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[33] *ep.* 54.9 (CCL 31:192); cf. *mor.* 2.13.29. Concerning the Lenten discipline in Hippo, see Suzanne Poque, "Introduction," *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermons pour la Pâque*, SC 116 (Paris: Cerf, 2003): 24–25.

[34] *s.* 205.2 (PL 38:1040). Cf. *s.* 207.2; 209.3; 210.8-9.

[35] On relaxing the fast on Holy Thursday see *ep.* 54.9 (CCL 31:192); on Holy Saturday see *s.* 210.1 (PL 38:1047); on Sundays see *ep.* 36.2-32 (CCL 31:130–53), in which Augustine treats the question at length and presses hard against rigorists who would extend the fast to include Sunday; he also defends the pluralism of practice among the African and Italian churches.

[36] *f. et op* .6.8; *s.* 206.3, 207.2, 208.1, 209.3. Augustine's views on sexuality continue to be misinterpreted or taken out of context. Essential studies are Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 387–427; Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 45–62; David G. Hunter, "Augustinian Pessimism? A New Look at Augustine's Teaching on Sex, Marriage, and Celibacy," *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994): 153–77; John C. Cavadini, "Feeling Right: Augustine on the Passions and Sexual Desires," *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005): 195–217.

[37] On almsgiving see *s.* 56.11, 58.10, 205.3, 206.2, 210.10. *s.* 213.11 (= *s. Guelf.* 1) mentions one all-night vigil; *s.* 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7) uses the plural "*vigiliis*."

[38] *c. Faust.* 30.5 (CSEL 25:753); trans. Teske, WSA 20:404.

social centers in the Greco-Roman world. In these recreational complexes one not only bathed but also relaxed, mingled with friends, hosted parties, even attended lectures. The *competentes*' "fast" from bathing ended on Holy Thursday. As Augustine told one correspondent, the issue was hygiene: "If you ask why the custom of . . . bathing [on Holy Thursday] has arisen, nothing more probable comes to my mind as I think of this than that the bodies of those to be baptized, unwashed throughout the observance of Lent, would come to the font with offense to the senses unless they were bathed on some [prior] day."[39]

This cluster of disciplines was an outward indicator of an inner resolve. As Augustine once told his *competentes*, penitential practices were taken up because "no one chooses a new life without having repented of the old." The church's rhythm of penance first, baptism later followed that dictated by Peter in Acts: "Repent and be baptized . . . in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:37-38).[40]

Augustine opened Lent with a sermon, what he referred to as a "trumpet call."[41] Six of these have come down to us: *Sermons* 205–210.[42] All six were addressed to the assembly as a whole and not just the *competentes*. *Sermon* 210 is of special interest since Augustine refers explicitly to baptismal candidates in his audience.

[39] *ep.* 54.10 (CCL 31:233); trans. Teske, WSA II/214.

[40] *s.* 352.2 (PL 39:1550–51); author's translation. Acts 2:37-38 is one of Augustine's favorite proof texts to explain the penitential practices of the *competentes*: *s.* 351.2; *f. et op.* 8.12, 11.17.

[41] *s.* 208.1 (PL 38:1044); trans. Hill, WSA III/6. The "trumpet call" plays on Joel 2:15. Cf. Ambrose, *De Helia et ieiunio* 1.1.

[42] Besides those six there is a miscellaneous sermon, *De utilitate ieiunii* (*On the Usefulness of Fasting*, CCL 46:225–41). It, like *symb. cat.* (discussed later in this chapter), was not included in the Maurist numbering of 396 sermons. Edmund Hill, in his translation of the complete sermons of Augustine, has recommended numbering this as *s.* 400. It was probably another inaugural Lenten sermon, though it is possible that it was delivered on some other fast day during the year. *Io. eu. tr.* 12 ends with exhortations similar to those found in *s.* 205–210. See Suzanne Poque, "Trois semaines de prédication à Hippone en février-mars 407," *Recherches augustiniennes* 7 (1971): 169–87, at 179–83. On fasting in Augustine see Boniface Ramsey, "Ieiunium," *Aug-Lex* 3 (1996–2002) 474–81.

Its imagery and turns of thought situate Lent, its meaning and dynamic, in terms of the Easter sacraments, giving the impression that it was aimed especially at *competentes*.

Augustine opened *Sermon* 210 with a favorite device, a "knotty problem." He noted that Christ had been baptized *before* he fasted whereas the *competentes* were baptized *after* they had fasted. This implied that the church did the opposite of what Christ did. Augustine then argued that the supposed clash did not exist. First, he offered a liturgical argument. Because of the bounty of Christ, the church did not need to baptize after some forty-day fast; it could baptize any day if need be. What is more, "the fact that far and away the greater number of those seeking baptism converge on this day only means that the greater joy of the feast attracts them, not that a richer grace of salvation is to be had then."[43] He then gave an exegetical argument. The baptism Christ received from John had been superseded by the baptism Christ gave his followers. John's baptism, much like circumcision and Passover, was numbered among the sacraments of the old dispensation. Augustine then repeated a theme from his *Tractates on John*: Christ submitted to baptism "to provide us an example of humility and devotion" and to "show the great devotion we should receive these sacraments with." Augustine then "solved" the knotty problem by appealing to one of his common-sense exegetical principles: check a text's context. So he argued: To understand Christ's fast one must look not at the episode that precedes it—Christ's baptism—but rather at the episode that follows it—Christ's battle with Satan. Fasting during Lent, therefore, meant imitating Christ, but not in the way first posed by the knotty problem: "Clearly, what he was teaching by that example is that we should fast whenever we happen to lock horns with the tempter in a more than usually fierce struggle."[44] The battle Christ faced was one everyone faced: "In the night of this age, so full of dangers and temptations, are there any who wouldn't be afraid? . . . That is why we have to fast and pray."[45]

[43] *s.* 210.1 (PL 38:1047); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:119.
[44] *s.* 210.2 (PL 38:1048); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:119.
[45] *s.* 210.5 (PL 38:1050); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:121.

In these six inaugural sermons Augustine stressed traditions of penitential piety that Christianity had inherited from Judaism: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. In his admonitions on fasting he, like Ambrose, entertained his audience by lampooning the wealthy who "observe Lent more like gourmets than religious." Augustine mocked the way they used Lenten restrictions as challenges to creative self-indulgence. The wealthy used to give up simple table wine but then scoured the marketplace for rare liquors; "they may shun as unclean platters which meat had been cooked on," but "they compete in topping the varieties and flavors of tasty dishes with lavish and expensively prepared fruits . . . and indulge their palates with lots of imported spices"; they may fast during the daylight hours but "when the time for eating comes, they stampede to well-stocked tables like cattle to troughs, overstuffing their bellies and getting heartburn from too many courses." As a result, they "hate to see Lent to come to an end."[46]

On the serious side, Augustine insisted that Lenten disciplines move one both inward and outward: inward to quell out-of-kilter passions, outward to rectify out-of-joint social structures. He insisted that a proper fast meant that one should not let the sun go down on one's anger, that one "fast from hatred, but feast on love."[47] Besides setting aside inner angers and halting public vendettas one had to repair the broken social order through care of the poor. This was not some pious option but a duty required by justice itself. Failure to give to those in need was the moral equivalent of theft.[48] This command lay at the heart of Augustine's core principle of social justice: "The surplus goods of the rich are the

[46] *s.* 210.10-11 (PL 38:1052–53); author's translation, *AOW*, 95.

[47] *s.* 207.3 (PL 38:1044); author's translation. See also *s.* 208.2, 209.1, 210.10.

[48] *s.* 206.2 (PL 38:1041). Three newly discovered sermons—*s.* 350D (= *s. Erfurt* 2), *s.* 350E (= *s. Erfurt* 3), and *s.* 350F (= *s. Erfurt* 4)—also focus on almsgiving. For the texts see Isabella Schiller, Dorothea Weber, and Clemens Weidmann, "Sechs neue Augustinuspredigten: Teil 2 mit Edition dreier Sermones zum Thema Almosen," *Wiener Studien* 122 (2009): 171–214. On the broader context see Richard Finn, ed., *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice (313–450)*, Oxford Classical Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the*

necessities of the poor. When you possess surplus goods, you possess the goods of others."[49] He also insisted that prayer without almsgiving was mere pretense: "If it's shameless of a farmer to look for a crop where he knows he hasn't sown any seed, how much more shameless must it be to look to God to be rich in giving [to you] when you have declined to listen to a poor man asking? It's in the poor person, after all, that the One who is never hungry wishes to be fed."[50] As Augustine saw it, one sought Christ where he said he would be: among the poor.

In these sermons Augustine appealed to athletic and military images, much as Chrysostom and Ambrose had done. Like them, Augustine linked Lent's ascetical exercises with those used to train athletes and soldiers. Lent was thus a sort of sacred fitness program or boot camp. It trained one for a wrestling match with Satan or for a battle against the forces of darkness. For such combat one needed to muster all the power at one's disposal. This meant training not only one's interiority (mind and heart) but also one's body: "One should fast so that one's body by being disciplined may fulfill its military stint and one's spirit by being humbled may seize victory."[51] As Augustine makes clear here and throughout his Lenten addresses, the body was a key locus of conflict. The body too had to be trained; it too had to be catechized. Since the battle was waged by the whole person, training for battle necessarily involved training the whole person. The training of the body, he argued, moved in counterpoint to the training of one's interiority: people "fast in body, they feast in spirit"; people were to refresh themselves with "God's word . . . so that the inner person, nourished by its proper food, may keep up a robust disciplining of the outer."[52]

Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–500 AD (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), esp. 322–84.

[49] *en. Ps.* 147.12 (CSEL 95.5:212); author's translation.

[50] *s.* 206.2 (PL 38:1041–42); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:107 (modified).

[51] *s.* 210.3 (PL 38:1048); author's translation. On the theme of the *militia Christi* see Suzanne Poque, *Le langage symbolique dans la prédication d'Augustin d'Hippone: Images héroïques*, 2 vols. CEASA 105 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1984), 1:37–68; George Lawless, "Militia christiana," *Aug-Lex* 4 (2012): 12–15.

[52] *s.* 205.1 (PL 38:1039); author's translation.

Augustine took pains to emphasize that Lenten asceticism had nothing to do with a Manichean rejection of the flesh: one should abstain from food and drink "without making the sacrilegious mistake of condemning as impure any of God's creatures,"[53] nor should one "conclude that the flesh is the enemy of the spirit, as though there were one maker of the flesh, and another rival maker of the spirit."[54] Augustine and his orthodox contemporaries viewed the body not as the Manichees did, as some evil mass to be shirked off. They spoke of the body as a headstrong horse that bucked up and threw its rider or as a contentious rebel plotting against the good governance of that which distinguished human beings from animals: the mind and will.[55] Lenten discipline was thus a way of bringing the body back into right relation with one's interiority:

> Let us restrain our body and saddle it into service; and let us, in taming it, bridle it back somewhat from things allowed: so that we, because of our unruly flesh, avoid slipping and sliding back into things not allowed. Other days, we should avoid getting wasted and drunk; these days, however, we should pull back from meals normally permitted. We should always swear off—and shun—adultery and fornication; but these days, even married people should hold back from sex. Our flesh, which will have gotten used to being reined in from enjoying its own rights, will submit to you so as not to usurp someone else's.[56]

Ultimately, for Augustine, the problem was not the flesh *per se*. The flesh was where the problem surfaced. The real culprit was the unruly human heart, which clung to the wrong things or, more

[53] *s.* 208.1 (PL 38:1045); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:113. See also *s.* 205.2; 400.3 (= *util. ieiun*).

[54] *s.* 400.4 (= *util. ieiun.*) (CCL 46:234); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:474.

[55] *s.* 400.3 (= *util. ieiun.*) (CCL 46:233–34).

[56] *s.* 207.2 (PL 38:1043); author's translation. "*Crapula et ebrietate*," which I have translated as "getting wasted and drunk," literally means "drunkenness and drunkenness." Edmund Hill, WSA III/6:105n7, has noted that *crapula* refers to a special resin put in wine to make it more intoxicating and has translated this as "drugs and drunkenness." Cf. *s.* 205.2, 206.3.

precisely, loved the good things God made in the wrong way.[57] So Augustine repeated Pauline views: that "food of any kind is clean for the clean," but, he added, "for no one is luxury clean."[58] The disciplines of Lent were a way of rooting out slovenly and self-destructive habits. They helped purge the poisons out of one's system—not unlike the demanding reshaping of habit that an alcoholic or drug addict must go through.

Augustine's assessment of the body in these talks was, in certain respects, unexceptional. He held views on sexuality, the body, the will, and the Fall, both shared with and different from the ascetical mainstream.[59] In his Lenten talks "Augustine was content," as Peter Brown notes, "with the most banal exhortations to restraint."[60] He did not speak of Lent in the lyric tones his colleagues in the Greek East used, as though Lent offered average laypeople a chance to "breathe in the free air of the desert," to glimpse the pre-lapsarian "angelic life" enjoyed by monks.[61] What Augustine

[57] *conf.* 10.31.43-47 (CCL 27:177–80). Possidius, when writing his biography, quotes this passage as the classic statement of Augustine's views; see *Vita* 22.

[58] *s.* 205.2 (PL 38:1040); author's translation. See also *s.* 208.1., 209.3.

[59] On Augustine's movement away from the ascetical mainstream see Brown, *The Body and Society*, 396–408, 425–27; Markus, *End of Ancient Christianity*, 45–62; and David G. Hunter, "Augustine on the Body," 353–64 in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Pivotal is the perspective of Paula Fredriksen, "A Response to 'Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels' by Elizabeth A. Clark," 402–3 in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), who notes that Augustine overturned eight hundred years of thinking about the human person, ideas as old as Plato, namely, that the body is the ultimate source of human downfall: "Alone of all these contestants—Manicheans, pagan philosophers, Pelagians, other Catholics, and even Paul himself—Augustine is least 'guilty' of the charge of dualism. . . . Augustine sees not man's body, but man's nature, as vitiated after the Fall. . . . The fault line caused by Adam's sin not only vitiated man's nature, sundering the fundamental unity of body and soul; it also ran right through the soul, separating intention and affect, dividing man's will from man's loves. . . . After the Fall, both body and soul are 'carnal' because human loves are oriented away from God and toward the self."

[60] Brown, *Body and Society*, 424.

[61] Ibid., 255.

meant by "reining in" the body was borne out by his own lifestyle. During his own time and, later, during the Middle Ages, Christian ascetics experimented with extremes. John Chrysostom, Evagrius Ponticus, and Jerome are among his contemporaries who wreaked havoc on their health by their ascetical gymnastics. Augustine chose a stripped-to-basics moderation over self-destructive austerity, as his biographer Possidius noted: "His clothes and shoes, and even his bedding, were simple and appropriate, being neither overly fastidious nor slovenly. . . . His meals were frugal and economical; at times, however, in addition to herbs and vegetables they included meat for the sake of guests or sick brethren. Moreover they always included wine. . . . Only the spoons were of silver; the vessels . . . were of earthenware, wood, or marble."[62] Augustine preferred simplicity. He wore the same sort of *byrrhus*, or cloak, worn by working-class laity. When wealthy people sent him fine clothes, he sent them back. As he remarked in one sermon: "I don't want your Graces to donate such things which only I, as it were, might make proper use of. An expensive cloak, for example, might be donated to me. It might be well suited for a bishop, but it is really not suited to Augustine, that is, a poor man born of poor parents."[63]

In speaking of Lent and its disciplines he not only called upon masculine images of military combat or athletic prowess; he also drew on feminine imagery. Lent was, for him, time in the church's womb. In *Sermon* 205 he rooted the forty days of Lent in ancient medical theories: just as "the human being destined to live this life takes shape in the womb in forty days," so the forty-day practice of Lent symbolized the coming-to-life of *competentes* within the womb

[62] Possidius, *Vita* 22 (Geerlings, 68–70). On Augustine's monasticism see Luc Verheijen, *Saint Augustine's Monasticism in the Light of Acts 4.32-35* (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1979); George Lawless, ed., *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); John Peter Kenney, "Mystic and Monk: Augustine and the Spiritual Life," 284–96 in *A Companion to Augustine*; Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle*, 173–84.

[63] *s.* 356.13 (PL 39:1579–80); author's translation, *AOW*, 105.

of the church.[64] In *Sermon* 210 he appealed to Jesus' words from the Gospel of John: "When a woman is in labor, she has sorrow, because her day has come; but when she has brought forth, there is great joy, because a human being has been born into the world" (John 16:21). This meant that the sorrows of fasting and prayer mirrored the experience of a woman in labor; "the Holy Spirit . . . produces in our hearts the unutterable groanings of holy desires," a spiritual equivalent of labor pains.[65] Augustine noted that while baptism marked a sort of coming-to-birth it was still only a beginning. Certain labor pains ended, but others continued. True rebirth took place only at the end of time, with the coming of the kingdom in which "we shall be poured out from this pregnancy of faith into eternity's light."[66] For Augustine the human condition remained a paradoxical mix: of anguish and joy, toil and rest, soured dreams and heady visions. As he explained to the *competentes*, these twin threads within human life found liturgical expression in the twin seasons of Lent and Easter: Lent symbolized the darker one, the painful coming-to-birth that took a lifetime; Easter symbolized the happier one, that periodic foretaste of an eschatological birth-into-God.[67] In these two liturgical seasons Christians drank in, by turns, the "not yet" and "already" of New Testament eschatology.

Such instructions on Lent would be the first of many for the *competentes*. From scattered references it seems that the *competentes* joined the larger assembly for daily liturgies and sermons.[68] Several of these public catecheses have survived: *Sermons* 5, 352, and 392. The last of these offers a fascinating glimpse of the way Augustine might catechize a mixed audience. On this occasion he divided the assembly into four groups and asked each to overhear admonitions addressed to others: "Let the faithful listen to what I am going to say to the *competentes*; let the *competentes* listen to what I am saying to the faithful; let the penitents listen to what I am saying to the

[64] *s.* 205.1 (PL 38:1039); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:103.
[65] *s.* 210.7 (PL 38:1054); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:122.
[66] *s.* 210.7 (PL 38:1054); author's translation. See also *en. Ps.* 41.
[67] *s.* 210.8 (PL 38:1051–52). See also 205.1, 206.1.
[68] Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 25.

competentes and the faithful; let the catechumens listen to what I am saying to the faithful and the *competentes* and the penitents; let everyone listen."[69] He then exhorted each, by turns, on the perils of adultery and concubinage and on the scandals each group caused the others. In *Sermon* 352, Augustine addressed the *competentes* at length and with great warmth. He encouraged them "to hear the word with eagerness" as they "draw nearer to the moment of pardon" and begged them never to doubt God's lavish mercy: that no matter what they had done in the past they were to trust that "all absolutely, however great or small," would be forgiven them. He played on their curiosity, reminding them that they stood on the brink of witnessing great secrets. He encouraged them: "Be joyful going to baptism; enter without fear on the road of the Red Sea." He tried to allay fears about certain future "enemies," those minor sins one committed daily. These would be destroyed the same way Israel destroyed the Amalekites: by standing, as Moses had stood, with arms raised in prayer.[70] In *Sermon* 5, Augustine exhorted those who "rush to receive the grace of baptism" to remember the debts that would be forgiven them and to extend the same magnanimity to others.[71] He referred, in passing, to a private instruction he had earlier given them on the crucifixion. Suzanne Poque has suggested that this passing reference indicates that the *competentes* were led through a sequence of special instructions.[72] If so, then only the tiniest fraction of Augustine's Lenten curriculum has been preserved.

Besides daily public sermons of this sort, the *competentes* also received private instructions. These touched on matters cloaked under the *disciplina arcani*. This meant that neither pagans nor ordinary catechumens would be allowed in. To these "secret" instructions let us now turn.

[69] *s.* 392.2 (PL 39:1710); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:421 (modified). The Maurists listed this sermon among the *dubii* but affirmed that it joined two authentic fragments from Augustine. Their assessment has been confirmed by Lambot and Verbraken; see Verbraken, *Études critiques*, 156.

[70] *s.* 352.2, 6-7 (PL 38:1550–51, 1555–58); author's translation.

[71] *s.* 5.2 (CCL 41:50); author's translation.

[72] Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 25.

Pagans and Christians shared, to some degree, a common religious topography.[73] As they saw it, the stars and planets moved according to a sublime harmony and order. Earth, by contrast, remained a precarious realm tottering on the edge of chaos. Here below, invisible demonic forces wandered about wreaking havoc. Demons were responsible for the vagaries that plagued human well-being: diseases, natural calamities, social ills. Christians interpreted these as evidence of the power of Satan. His influence seemed everywhere. It masqueraded under the guise of paganism and its apparatus (idols, sacrifices, amulets, astrology); Satan's pomps were displayed in cultural institutions (the bloody public games, the bawdy theaters, the pagan festivals); his dark powers had seeped into every crevice of ordinary social life (patterns of usury, drunkenness, or infanticide, the land-grabbing habits of the wealthy, or the graft of imperial officials).

This worldview shaped ancient Christians' vision of conversion. They certainly used to speak of *conversio*, "turning," in the multiple ways we are familiar with: as a sudden inner-psychic experience; as a shift in one's institutional affiliation; as an integral process of intellectual, moral, and affective growth. But they viewed it not just psychologically or sociologically; they also thought of it cosmologically. Conversion marked a metaphysical shift, a transfer of power from the reign of Satan to the reign of God. With this transfer of power and allegiance came a change in status. The convert ceased to suffer Satan's tyranny and came to enjoy God's magnanimous rule. This awesome transition was tumultuous. The Christian was committed to an *agon*, "a public battle," against dark forces.[74]

[73] On this worldview see Eric R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 49–62, 73–94; Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1–26.

[74] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 240. On the *agon* image in Augustine see also Poque, *Le langage symbolique*, 1:69–97.

The high drama of this "turning" of conversion played itself out in one of the major Lenten rites: the scrutiny (*scrutinium*).[75] In Hippo this rite took place, it seems, soon after enrollment.[76] Augustine alludes to elements of it in *Sermon* 216, delivered to *competentes* immediately after he had performed the rite. Its flow, however, emerges in somewhat clearer form in sermons by Quodvultdeus of Carthage, a younger contemporary and friend of Augustine.[77] According to Quodvultdeus, *competentes* spent the night "not lulled with the delight of sleep nor by minds deceived by fantasies and empty dreams . . . but rather by keeping vigil, by praying, by psalm-singing, by brandishing weapons against our adversary, the

[75] On the rite see Albert Dondeyne, "La discipline des scrutins dans l'église latine avant Charlemagne," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 26 (1932): 5–33, 751–87; on it in Hippo, see R. DeLatte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême. Étude liturgico-historique du rituel baptismal des adultes chez saint Augustin," *Questions liturgiques* 56 (1975): 177–223, at 196–99; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 26–33; Thomas M. Finn, "It Happened One Saturday Night: Ritual and Conversion in St. Augustine's North Africa," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 589–616; Martin Klöckener, "Exorcismus," *Aug-Lex*, 2: 1188–94.

[76] The tone and tenor of *s.* 216 suggest that it occurred soon after the beginning of Lent. This is the view of Th.-André Audet, "Note sur les catéchèses baptismales de S. Augustin," *Augustinus Magister*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954–55), I:151–60, at 158; Benedict Busch, "De modo quo sanctus Augustinus descripserit initiationem christianam," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938): 385–483, at 431; and DeLatte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême," 192–93. In Carthage, as evidenced by Quodvultdeus's Lenten sermons, it took place just before the *redditio symboli*, presumably one week before Easter. Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 26–27, favors this dating for *Sermo* 216 but ignores the broader tone of the sermon. All are agreed that the scrutiny/exorcism referred to in Augustine's sermon is the same as that attested in Quodvultdeus. Either Augustine's church in Hippo worked from a slightly different calendar from that of Carthage or there was more than one scrutiny (though Quodvultdeus implies that there was only one), or the tone of Augustine's sermon is simply misleading.

[77] Most scholars accept Quodvultdeus as the author of the series that includes *De symbolo* I–III and *Contra Iudaeos, paganos, et arrianos*. For a discussion see René Braun, "Introduction," *Livre des promesses et des prédictions de Dieu*, SC 101:88–113.

devil."[78] Then "from concealment you [*competentes*] were each presented before the entire church, where, with your head—once erect in pride and malice—bowed."[79] They then knelt or prostrated themselves; these gestures symbolized that "pride is utterly destroyed, humility is given entry."[80] The *competentes* then stripped off their cloaks and stood "barefoot on the goatskin."[81] There is no mention of this goatskin (*cilicium*) in the initiation rites of Rome, Constantinople, Milan, or Gaul, but it figures prominently in the scrutiny rites of Antioch, Edessa, and North Africa.[82] In itself goatskin was a symbol of penitence.[83] But the gesture of standing on it—or perhaps stamping one's foot on it—signaled that the *competentes* renounced their sinful inheritance, alluding to the widespread view that Adam and Eve had worn tunics of goatskin.[84] Augustine mentions in *City of God* that this gesture signified the hope that at the last judgment one be numbered not among the goats but among the sheep.[85] While they were standing on the goatskin, the *competentes*' bodies were examined. (Ambrose had alluded to a similar sort of physical examination.)[86] What this entailed is not clear. Scholars have suggested possible motives: to see if the *competentes* suffered

[78] Quodvultdeus, *Contra Iudaeos, Paganos, et Arrianos* (CCL 60:227); author's translation.

[79] Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* I.1 (CCL 60:305); trans. Thomas M. Finn, *Quodvultdeus of Carthage: The Creedal Homilies*, ACW 60:23.

[80] Quodvultdeus, *Contra Iudaeos, Paganos, et Arrianos* 1 (CCL 60:228); author's translation. Cf. Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* I.1 (CCL 60:305). Augustine refers to a prostration on the *cilicium* in *ciu. dei* 15.20; cf. *s.* 216.10. See Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 28.

[81] Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* I.1 (CCL 60:305); author's translation. Cf. Augustine, *s.* 216.10-11; Theodore, *Catechetical Homily* 12, synopsis.

[82] Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 28.

[83] *ciu. dei* 15.20 (CCL 48:485). Cf. *cons. eu.* 2.4.13.

[84] Johannes Quasten, "Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Exorcism of the Cilicium," *Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942): 209–19, at 218; Edward Yarnold, ed., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: the Origins of the RCIA*, 2d ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), 9–12.

[85] *ciu. dei* 15.20 (CCL 48:485). Cf. *s.* 216.10.

[86] Ambrose, *Explanatio symboli* 1 (SC 25bis:46). See also Augustine, *s.* 216.11; Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* I.1, II.1.

from leprosy or some other contagious disease; to probe for signs of possession inscribed in their flesh; to set them free from Satan's physical powers.[87]

An exorcist then came forward and, according to Augustine, "invokes the name of your redeemer" and "heaps curses on [the devil], appropriate to his vile wickedness."[88] The invocations included calling down "the humble Christ, Most High"[89] and "the earth-shaking all-powerful Trinity."[90] According to another North African, Optatus of Milevis, the formula of imprecation against Satan was: "Cursed one, get out!"[91] Besides verbal formulae, the exorcist also breathed upon, or more precisely "hissed at" the candidate. This gesture, the *exsufflatio*, was a conventional sign of contempt and had become, in Christian circles, a standard gesture of exorcism. Athanasius says St. Antony, when confronted by a demon, had hissed at it and called on the name of Christ.[92] Ordinary Christians used this gesture to exorcise demonic spirits that they believed inhabited pagan statues. It was such a common Christian habit that hissing at a statue of the emperor was declared a criminal act.[93] The use of breath was not accidental. For the ancients, one's breath was one's life force, one's *spiritus*, the power that animated the flesh. The *exsufflatio* symbolized expelling the demonic life force that had invaded candidates' God-given spirit.[94]

[87] These three interpretations are given, respectively, by Busch, "De modo quo S. Augustinus descripserit initiationem christianam," 435n195; Dondeyne, "La discipline des scrutins," 16; B. Capelle, "L'introduction du catéchuménat à Rome," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 5 (1933): 148.

[88] *s.* 216.6 (PL 38:1080); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:171.

[89] Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* 1.1 (CCL 60:305); trans. Finn, ACW 60:23. Cf. Augustine, *s.* 216.6.

[90] *s.* 216.10 (PL 38:1082); author's translation.

[91] Optatus of Milevis, *De schismate Donatistarum* 4.6 (CSEL 26:110): "*Maledicte, exi foras*." Augustine uses the expression "*mittere foras*": *agon.* 1.1; *s.* 145.5; *c. Iul. imp.* 1.50 and 2.181.

[92] Athanasius, *Vita s. Antonii* 40 (SC 400:242–44).

[93] *c. Iul. imp.* 3.199 (CSEL 85:498).

[94] Augustine, in *c. Iul. imp.* 3.199 (CSEL 85:498) says: "In exsufflation is blown out the devil who holds the little one guilty by the infection of sin so that, when he is driven out, the little one is transferred to Christ." In 3.146

Once, in a sermon to *competentes*, Augustine explained its significance: "As you saw today, even little children are hissed at and exorcised, so that the hostile power of the devil, who led one man astray in order to gain possession of humankind, can be knocked out of them. So it's not these babies—God's creation—whom we hiss at and exorcize, but the one under whose sway come all those born with sin."[95] Finally, either at the scrutiny itself or soon after, the *competentes* voiced their new-found freedom by formally renouncing Satan.[96]

In *Sermon* 216, given just after this dramatic (and rather frightening) rite, Augustine spoke of conversion in the terms set by 1 Peter 2:9: the *competentes* were being "snatched from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of [God's] glory."[97] His sermon was mystagogical in style, weaving cultural and biblical images with ritual actions and drawing out their import for theology, spirituality, and moral action. He sought to hone the *competentes*' vision of conversion; he also sought to make his words a force to provoke it.

This address was one of his earliest, given soon after his ordination as a presbyter. He played on this fact in his opening words: "The clumsy beginnings both of my ministry and of your conception—for you are beginning, by divine grace, to be quickened in the womb of faith—ought to be sustained by prayer. That way my talk may invigorate and encourage you along, and your conception

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he notes: "They are under the power of the devil and that in order to be set free from his power those about to be baptized undergo the rite of exsufflation." This rite of *exsufflatio* figures prominently in Augustine's debate with the Pelagians. See *pecc. mer.* 1.34.63; *gr. et pecc. or.* 2.39.45; *nupt. et conc.* 1.20.22, 2.29.50; *ep.* 194.46; *c. Iul.* 3.5.11. See also William Harmless, "Christ the Pediatrician: Augustine on the Diagnosis and Treatment of the Injured Vocation of the Child," 127–53 in *The Vocation of the Child*, ed. Patrick McKinley Brennan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), at 147–48.

[95] *s.* 398.2 (= *symb. cat.*) (CCL 46:186); author's translation.

[96] Quodvultdeus, *De symbolo* 1.1 (CCL 60:306); also *De symbolo* 2.1; *Contra Iudaeos, Paganos, et Arrianos* 1. Augustine cites the formula in *s.* 215.1; the renunciation is given in *s.* 216.6.

[97] *s.* 216.6 (PL 38:1080); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:171.

may encourage and console me."[98] Just as he was beginning his ministry, so the *competentes* were beginning theirs. He and they were thus *contirones*, "fellow new recruits."[99] He saw a mutuality and interplay between their respective tasks:

> *Nos instruimus sermonibus,*
> *vos proficite moribus!*
> *Spargimus sermonem verbi,*
> *fructum reddite fidei!*
>
> We instruct by words,
> As for you: Make progress by deeds!
> We scatter the seed of the word,
> As for you: Hand back the fruit of faith![100]

The intertwining jingling rhymes mirror the ideas: that the catechist's ministry of words was intertwined with the *competentes*' ministry of deeds. This recalls the catechetical principle Augustine would later outline in his treatise to Deogratias: "For so great is this feeling of compassion that when people are touched by us as we speak and we by them as they learn, we each dwell in the other, and so it is as if they speak in us what they hear while we, in some way, learn in them what it is we teach."[101] For Augustine the converting individual was a teacher as well, a teacher by deed. While this back-and-forth dynamic—from word to deed to word—was inherent in all catechesis, it assumed particular urgency as baptism approached.

Augustine then spun out further variations on mutuality, modulating from his relationship with the *competentes* to their relationship with one another:

> Certainly, your very name—since you are called *competentes*—shows that you crave this, that you are striving for this with all the energy of your being. What else are "*competentes*" but people petitioning for something together? For just as "*condocentes*," "*concurrentes*," and "*considentes*" mean nothing other than "people teaching together,"

[98] *s.* 216.1 (PL 38:1076–77); author's translation.
[99] *s.* 216.2 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.
[100] *s.* 216.1 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.
[101] *cat. rud.* 12.17 (CCL 46:141); author's translation, *AOW*, 145.

> "people running together," and "people pitching camp together," so the term "*competentes*" was welded together for no other reason than to describe people who were petitioning for one and the same thing at the same time.[102]

Augustine here appeals to etymology to set out a theology of initiation. Playing on the title "*competentes*," he argued that his hearers were not simply "petitioners" but "co-petitioners," for, as the Latin itself implied, they were people "petitioning" (*-petere*) for something "together" (*com-*). They had bound themselves together in a sort of class-action suit. The other compound words Augustine lists were equally evocative: the *competentes* were to be fellow teachers, fellow runners, fellow soldiers. By this he made a key point: that conversion was not some individualistic pursuit but a joint enterprise that formed the *competentes* into a band of fellow seekers bound by a common task and shared ministry. As *concurrentes* they were to run together toward a common goal. As *condocentes* they were to teach one another the path. As *considentes* they were to assemble as soldiers fearless of the "terrors of the world," even as "rival armies are arrayed" nearby and "war is ready to break out."[103]

Augustine then explored the deeper implications of conversion: its shape, its theological meaning, and its ethical imperatives. He made no effort to be systematic. Rather, he flowed from theme to theme, weaving aphorism with image, proclamation with exhortation. The address leaves the impression of an order more musical than logical. To set out the metaphysical implications of conversion, Augustine focused on two main themes: (i) God's action and (ii) the *competentes*' response. To highlight God's action he appealed to various biblical metaphors that accented in sharp, dichotomous terms the transfer of power and allegiance. The *competentes* were passing from darkness to light, from debt to solvency, from slavery to freedom, from the pangs of labor to the joy of new birth, from the desolation of exile to the consolation of coming home. This array of images would have had considerable

[102] *s.* 216.1 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.

[103] *s.* 216.1, quoting Ps 27:3-4 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.

poignancy for Augustine's hearers. They, obviously, did not have the benefit of electric lights and experienced the dark of night as a powerful, ominous reality; they lived in a world where slavery was commonplace and knew first-hand the dreadful cruelty slaves endured; they had no hospitals and few painkillers and knew childbirth to be a dangerous, painful process; they depended heavily on support from extended family, clan, and city, and knew of few punishments more fearful than exile.

Let us look at two of these image clusters. First, the slavery/emancipation motif: Augustine described conversion as manumission:

> Now shall the [devil's] slave state be devastated, under whose tyrannical regime he kept you in his possession. The slave-yoke with which he brutally oppressed you shall be lifted off you and set upon his own neck instead. All you have to do for your liberation is to give your consent to your redeemer. . . . Make a stand; when you make a stand, stick to it. Do not bear the yoke any longer; instead, break open the fetters and toss the yoke away and "do not ever again let yourselves be held under the yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1).[104]

Augustine echoes here the biblical theme of Christ the liberator, the one who shattered the shackles binding Satan's slaves. This biblical accent on liberation moved against the grain of ancient thought. Ancients tended to be fatalists. They often saw their lives as one long, tedious subjugation to powers beyond their control, whether the tyranny of government or the whimsy of wealthy patrons, whether the sublime indifference of the gods or a fixity of fate dictated by the stars. Augustine insisted that conversion meant freedom from all that, a liberation won not by *competentes*' efforts but by Christ's. They had only to give their consent and their slave yoke would be snapped off.

Second, the labor/new birth motif: This classic New Testament image of conversion was one Augustine played on regularly. Here he added new twists:

[104] *s.* 216.7, 10 (PL 38:1080, 1082); author's translation. See *agon.* 7.7.

> Look, mother Church is in labor, see, she is groaning in travail to give birth to you, to bring you forth into the light of faith. Do not agitate her maternal womb with your impatience, and thus constrict the passage of your delivery. . . . God is Father, the Church, mother. You will be born of these parents very, very differently from the way you were born of [your human parents]. The birth of offspring here will not be accompanied by labor, by woe, by weeping, by death; but by ease, by happiness, by joy, and by life.[105]

Augustine describes the *competentes* as the unborn whose confinement allowed them to be knit together in the church's womb. He called them to passivity, to avoid disturbing the quickening, to submit themselves to God's life-giving powers. Conversion also meant entering a new extended family. In this household they would have God as "father" and the church as "mother." This meant new social bonds, new behaviors, new affections. The *competentes* thus stood on the threshold of a new status: they would become "children of God and children by adoption."[106]

Such dichotomous imagery might give the impression that Augustine advocated a Christianity of discontinuity, a born-again view of things. But he balanced dichotomous images with other more gradualist ones. He played on Jesus' parable of the sower and described conversion as a slow laboring to clear land that had been overgrown with thorns but in time would produce high yields.[107] Later he described how acquiring virtue would remain a lifelong task:

> Your infancy will be innocence, your childhood reverence, your adolescence patience, your youth virtue, your middle age merit, your old age nothing less than the white hairs of wisdom and understanding. These are not stages of life through which you will be successively developed, but ages in which you will be permanently renewed. . . . While these ages may not come simultaneously,

[105] *s.* 216.7-8 (PL 38:1080–81); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:171–72
[106] *s.* 216.8 (PL 38:1081); author's translation.
[107] *s.* 216.3 (PL 38:1078); author's translation.

still in the devoted and justified soul they persist together
and in harmony.[108]

Augustine plays here on a traditional scheme—dividing human life into "six ages"—and applies it to the life of faith. He argues that conversion is a lifelong process, that one only gradually acquires the virtue of a given stage. Like modern faith-development theorists, he also argues that one does not outgrow earlier virtues but brings them along to the next stage. In time a new harmony, a new aesthetics of being, takes shape as one subjects oneself more and more to God's power and thus becomes more fully and more perfectly the person one was created to be.

The other side of the coin was the *competentes*' response to God's action. Here Augustine invoked other images. At one point he pretended to be an auctioneer:

In the auction and the bartering of faith:
Look, the kingdom of heaven is up on the block and up for sale!
Look inside your consciences' bank-account!
And pile it all up!
Put together your hearts' treasures, act together!
And yet, you will pick it up for free—if you spot the great grace offered you.
You spend nothing, and yet what you get is great.[109]

Augustine's rhetorical skills are on full display here. He imitates the cadence and slogans of auctioneers and of street-vendors hawking their merchandise in the local bazaar. His point was a simple one: God's action is utterly gratuitous; the *competentes* buy the kingdom at bargain-basement prices. Other images stress the opposite: that conversion is a bitter struggle, a hard-fought contest:

[108] *s.* 216.8 (PL 38:1081); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:172. On this traditional scheme and Augustine's use of it see Robert A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17–29; Bernhard Kötting and Wilhelm Geerlings, "Aetas," *Aug-Lex* 1 (1986–1994): 150–58.

[109] *s.* 216.3 (PL 38:1073); author's translation.

> Look, that's where your stadium is! That's where the wrestling mats are! That's where the race-track is! That's where the boxing ring is! If you want to knock down a deadly sparring partner with a strong-armed faith, then overthrow your evil ways and wrap yourselves up in good ones. If you want to run in such a way as to grab the prize, then run away from the unjust and chase after the just. If you want to box in such a way that you do not punch thin air but boldly pummel your opponent, then discipline your body and bring it back under control so that—controlling all your appetites and fighting according to the rules—you may triumph and share a heavenly prize and a laurel-crown that will never wilt.[110]

Here Augustine compares conversion to an *agon*—a race, a wrestling bout, a boxing match. For Augustine and his contemporaries, conversion meant wrestling with Satan, and to prepare for such combat one had to undergo a variety of training exercises. Here he repeats familiar admonitions (overthrow bad habits, embrace good ones, discipline the body) and adds a new one: "chase after the just." Augustine was convinced that faith was more than theological know-how. It meant acquiring a *habitus*, a whole web of attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that imbued the lives of the faithful. So he called on *competentes* to apprentice themselves to seasoned veterans, to those who displayed a hands-on mastery of faith in the arena of the everyday.

Augustine used this *agon* imagery to warn *competentes* that their past allegiance with Satan had left them vulnerable. If, however, they put their bodies under God's protection they need not fear: "As you once brandished your bodies as weapons of iniquity for sin, so now may you brandish your limbs as weapons of justice for God (cf. Rom 6:19). In a deadly ploy against you, your attacker has armed himself with your own javelins. In a saving counterattack against him, let your protector in turn be armed with your limbs. Your attacker will not harm you if he does not grab hold of your limbs while you beat a retreat."[111] Here again, Augustine speaks

[110] *s.* 216.6 (PL 38:1080); author's translation. See *agon.* 1.1, 6.6. On the theme of victory see Poque, *Le langage symbolique*, 1:99–111.

[111] *s.* 216.2 (PL 38:1077–78); author's translation. See *agon.* 2.2, 7.7-8.

of the body as the locus of the war. As he saw it, Satan might use the *competentes*' own bodies against them as if their bodies were still within his armory. By asceticism the *competentes* had begun to wrest their bodies back from Satan's possession and return them to God's. For this battle they needed to muster formidable powers to counteract those of Satan.

This train of thought led Augustine to refer back to the moment of exorcism:

> What I do for you—that is, by invoking your redeemer's name—you finish up by scrutinizing your heart and by contrition. For my part, I thwart ploys by pleading with God and by rebuking your old enemy. For your part, keep plying God with vows, and keep up your contrition of heart. That way, you may be rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's dazzling light. This now is your work; this, your task. For my part, I heap curses on [the devil] for his vile wickedness. For your part, join the battle—an incredibly glorious one—by turning your back on him and by devoutly renouncing him.[112]

Here Augustine reassured them: he had joined his forces with theirs in a common cause; just as he and they were fellow recruits, so now they were fellow combatants. They each had their respective tasks. Augustine as exorcist had used the words as weapons, directing, on the one hand, imprecations against Satan and, on the other, invocations to God. Yet, he insisted, they too had work to do: not only by liturgical gesture (turning one's back) and liturgical word (a vow of renunciation) but also by turning public scrutiny into interior scrutiny.

This accent on interior scrutiny appears again in his comments on the rite's bodily examination. He called on the *competentes* to probe their hearts' health just as the ritualized physical had probed their bodies' health: "We . . . exhort you to preserve in your hearts the health that is apparent in your bodies."[113] This

[112] *s.* 216.6 (PL 38:1080); author's translation.

[113] *s.* 216.11 (PL 38:1082); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:174.

stress on interiority was Augustine's trademark. "Augustine never questioned the broad outlines of . . . [ancient] 'religious topography,'" as Brown notes; "Augustine merely turned the Christian struggle inwards: its amphitheater was the heart; it was an inner struggle against forces in the soul."[114] Augustine certainly thought that demons wandered the earth, but he worried most about those that haunted the human heart. As he once put it: "The devil mustn't be blamed for everything; sometimes human beings can act the devil to themselves."[115]

Augustine also drew out the rite's moral implications. Just as the *competentes* had stripped off their tunics, so Augustine exhorted them to strip off their old Adamic self: "Do you see, my fellow recruits, what delights of the Lord you will come upon when you toss away the delights of the world? . . . Strip off the 'old man' that you may be clothed with the new."[116] Just as they had trampled on the goatskin, so they were to conquer and trample on the world: "When you were scrutinized and when that one who persuaded you to run away and desert God was rightly rebuked by the earth-shaking all-powerful Trinity, you were not clothed in a sackcloth of goatskin. However, your feet mystically stood on it. The vices and hides of she-goats must be trampled on; the rags of he-goats [that at the last judgment will stand] at the left hand must be ripped to shreds."[117] Such ceremony was just the beginning. The *competentes* still had to make headway against bad habits, those vices that had led to their prior desertion of God.

Through it all Augustine remained attuned to the *competentes*' feelings. He recognized that the whole discipline of Lent—the ascetical discipline, the rite of scrutiny and exorcism, the stark rhetoric—caused a kind of deconstruction. It disfigured their old sense of self, demolished old patterns and old relationships. So he begged the *competentes* to look beyond the present, to imagine a new, transfigured self: "Do not despise yourselves because it has

[114] Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed., 240–41.

[115] *s.* 163B.5 (= *s. Frangip.* 5; MA 1:216); trans. Hill, WSA III/5:184.

[116] *s.* 216.2 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.

[117] *s.* 216.10-11 (PL 38:1082); author's translation.

not yet appeared what you will be"; "love what you are going to be, for you will be children of God and children by adoption."[118] He encouraged them to see themselves the way God saw them: "Do not feel you are worthless when your creator and the creator of all things has appraised your value at such a high price that daily he pours out the incredibly precious blood of his only-begotten Son."[119] They would enjoy a new self, Augustine insisted, one made no longer simply in "the image of him who is from earth" (Adam), but also in "the image of him who is from heaven" (Christ).[120] Baptism marked the forging of a new interiority. No longer would the *competentes* be so deeply racked by this *agon* with Satan, by the chaos and disorder of earthly life. They would now have the divine life implanted within their hearts; they would enjoy its power pulsing through their bodies; their hearts would no longer mirror only the tumult and transience of earthly life but would begin to reflect the harmony and constancy of the upper-worldly, that orderly procession of the stars and spheres of heaven.

A PACT AMONG PEARL MERCHANTS: THE CREED

On Saturday, two weeks before Easter, the *competentes* gathered for a solemn ceremony: the "handing-over of the creed," or *traditio symboli*.[121] During it Augustine recited the creed—or "symbol," as he usually called it—and gave a phrase-by-phrase explana-

[118] *s.* 216.2, 8 (PL 38:1077, 1081); author's translation.

[119] *s.* 216.3 (PL 38:1078); author's translation.

[120] *s.* 216.2 (PL 38:1077); author's translation.

[121] The *traditio symboli* occurred a week before the *redditio symboli* and the *traditio orationis*; the *traditio orationis* occurred one week before the Vigil with a solemn *redditio symboli* sometime that day: see Augustine's comments in *s.* 213.1, 9 (= *s. Guelf* 1); *s.* 58.1, 13; 59.1; also Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 26, 59, and 65. Pierre-Patrick Verbraken, "Les sermons CCXV et LVI de saint Augustin: *De symbolo* et *de oratione dominica*," *Revue Bénédictine* 68 (1958): 5–40, at 5–6, proposes a different chronology: three weeks before Easter the *traditio symboli*; two weeks before Easter the first *redditio symboli* and the *traditio orationis*; a week before Easter a second *redditio symboli* and a *redditio orationis*; Easter Vigil a third *redditio symboli*. He offers no justification for his views. Poque (26n2) argues that this chronology does not accurately reflect the texts.

tion. This rite was an important milestone. It marked the first time *competentes* heard the creed and marked the first of the mysteries—previously cloaked under the *disciplina arcani*—now open for their perusal. Four of Augustine's sermons from this occasion have come down to us: *Sermons* 212,[122] 213,[123] 214,[124] and *On the Symbol* (*De symbolo ad catechumenos*).[125]

After this "handing-over," the *competentes* were expected to spend the next week memorizing the creed (with the help of godparents).[126] The next Saturday, eight days before Easter, they gathered again for a "handing-back of the creed," or *redditio symboli*. Here Augustine tested *competentes* individually to see if

[122] *s.* 212 is not a full-scale sermon; it is only an *exordium* delivered prior to the *traditio symboli*.

[123] *s.* 213 in the Maurist version (PL 38:1060–65) is incomplete; it lacks both the *exordium* that preceded the *traditio* rite as well as the *peroratio*. The complete text is found as *s. Guelf.* 1 (MA 1:441–50). I will use the *s. Guelf.* text (and paragraph numbering) in what follows.

[124] The opening words of *s.* 214 imply that Augustine was newly ordained; this may well be his earliest sermon. At the end of §1 someone has inserted these words: "*After this introduction, the whole Symbol is to be recited without any exposition accompanying it:* I believe in God the Father almighty, *and the rest that follows on it. You know that it is not customary to write this Symbol down. That being said, the following exposition is to be added*." Who inserted these instructions? Augustine? a *notarius*? some later copyist? Some have presumed a copyist. Pierre-Patrick Verbraken, "Le sermon CCXIV de saint Augustine pour la tradition du symbole," *Revue Bénédictine* 72 (1962): 7–21, claims that Augustine inserted them and presumes that this sermon was never delivered orally by Augustine but was composed as a model for presbyters charged with this work (much like the sample addresses in *cat. rud.*). He discards—too quickly, I believe— the Maurists' suggestion that Augustine retouched and published an earlier sermon for the benefit of fellow presbyters involved in the same work as he.

[125] *De symbolo ad catechumenos* (*symb. cat.*) is a miscellaneous sermon that circulated independently and was not included by the Maurists in their listing of the 396 *Sermones ad populum*. Edmund Hill has recommended adding it to that list, numbering it as *s.* 398. The title ". . . *ad catechumenos*" was assigned by later editors and, technically speaking, is inaccurate since Augustine would not have given the creed to ordinary catechumens but only to *competentes.*

[126] *s.* 213.11 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:449–50).

each could recite it exactly as it had been given.[127] This served as a dress rehearsal for the solemn "handing-back" held on Holy Saturday.[128] Augustine used this as an occasion to give the *competentes* a second sermon on it. Only one of these sermons has survived: *Sermon* 215.

Both the *traditio symboli* and *redditio symboli* took place within a liturgical setting, but it is not clear whether these rites were inserted into the regular Saturday liturgy (that is, sometime between the dismissal of the catechumens and the Eucharist) or were free-standing liturgies. Ambrose and the *competentes*, as we saw, had retired to the baptistery for the handing-over of the creed. If the same tradition existed in Hippo, then Augustine and the *competentes* would have gathered in a wing separate from but connected to the main basilica. This wing had a large adjoining vestibule and, as the *competentes* would later discover, a baptismal font.[129] If one reconstructs from these sermons the wording of the creed that Augustine comments on, it becomes clear that sometimes he handed on the creed he had learned in Milan and at other times the one used in North Africa.[130] (See chart 11.)

[127] *s.* 215.1 (PL 38:1072).

[128] *s.* 58.1 (CCL 41Aa:199).

[129] There are certain passing remarks that seem to indicate that Augustine also held the *traditio symboli* in the baptistery complex. In *s.* 213.8, Augustine seems to point in the direction the font ("*Ecce venturi estis ad fontem sanctum*"). In *s.* 213.11 he tells the *competentes* that they will return to this spot for an all-night prayer vigil: ". . . *et quomodo vigiletis ad gallicantum, ad orationes quas hic celebratis*." On the location of the outer vestibule and baptistery see Erwan Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone: Ville épiscopale de saint Augustin* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1958), 100–12; Henri-Iréné Marrou, "La Basilique chrétienne d'Hippone," *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 6 (1960): 109–54, at 149–50.

[130] For a discussion of this see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3d ed. (New York: Longman, 1971), 172–81; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 62–63; Joseph T. Lienhard, "Creed, *Symbolum*," *ATA*, 254–55. *s.* 212 is hard to judge since it does not comment on the creed phrase by phrase but serves simply as a prelude to the *traditio*. Kelly lists it with those commenting on the Milanese Creed while Poque claims its phrasing reflects the North African creed. On the origins and developments of Western creeds see Liuwe H. Westra,

In the *exordium* of these sermons Augustine stressed memorizing the creed: "Say it on your beds; ponder it in the streets; do not forget it during meals; and even when your body sleeps, keep watch over it in your heart."[131] He emphasized that in doing this memorizing they needed to guard secrecy: "Nobody writes [down] a symbol for it to be read . . . let your memories be your book."[132] In repeating it they were not simply inscribing words in their memory; they were internalizing its truth, learning it "by heart" in the true sense of the term. This had theological implications. Augustine would cite Jeremiah 31:33—that God would write a new covenant on people's hearts—and insist:

> It is to illustrate this truth [from Jeremiah] that by the simple hearing of the Symbol it is written not on tablets, or any other material, but on people's hearts. The God who has called you to his kingdom and his glory will ensure that it is also written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit, once you have been born again by his grace; so that you may love what you believe, and faith may work in you through love. In this way may you please the Lord God, the giver of all good things, not out of fear of punishment like slaves, but out of love like free people.[133]

Augustine thought the creed offered privileged insights that defied reasoning: "Let this faith impress itself on your hearts and guide your confession. On hearing this, believe so that you may understand; so that by making progress you may be able to understand what you believe."[134] Here Augustine emphasizes a principle pivotal to his own conversion. The Manichees had claimed that one could reason it all out, that there was no need for faith. As

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The Apostles' Creed: Origin, History, and Some Early Commentaries, Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

[131] *s.* 215.1 (PL 38:1072); author's translation. Cf. *s.* 398.1.1 (= *symb. cat.*).

[132] *s.* 398.1.1 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:185); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:445. See also *s.* 212.2; *f. et sym.* 1.1.

[133] *s.* 212.2 (SC 116:184); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:138. Also *s.* 398.1.1. (= *symb. cat.*).

[134] *s.* 214.10 (PL 38:1071); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:156. See also *s.* 212.1, 398.2.4 (= *symb. cat.*).

we saw, one of the key lessons Augustine took from his time with Ambrose was one he found encapsulated in the old Latin version of Isaiah 7:9: "Unless you believe, you will not understand." As Michael Cameron has noted: "For Augustine faith was above all a proper and *reasonable* response to the encounter with the authority of divine Wisdom, for human reason was too weak to figure out how to heal its own sickness and untwist its gnarled ideas about God and truth. A person believing this kind of authority, he thought, was every bit as rational as someone without medical knowledge who ventures to trust a doctor at a time of illness."[135] Augustine did not advocate some sort of fideism; he was not saying "just believe." It is the second half of his sentence that is crucial, that "by making progress you may be able to understand what you believe." Knowledge is possible, but it begins in trusting in the one who makes healing of mind and heart possible.

Augustine admitted that, even if the precise wording of the creed had been withheld until that day, the *competentes* were already familiar with its contents: "These truths that you are about to receive, that you will commit to memory and profess in words, are neither new nor unfamiliar to you. For you are used to hearing them laid out in a variety of ways in the holy Scriptures and in sermons given in church. But now they are to be handed over to you gathered together, compressed down, and arranged in a fixed order. That way your faith may be well grounded, your public profession prepared for, and your memory not overburdened."[136] Augustine, like Cyril and Ambrose, saw the creed as a compendium of core elements of biblical faith. Thus one finds Augustine making few points in these catecheses that do not appear elsewhere in his public sermons. The creed's wording may have been secret, but both its tenets and his explanation of them were very much part of the public domain. Yet both the creed itself and the catecheses on it served an urgent pedagogical need. The *competentes*

[135] Michael Cameron, *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 78.

[136] *s.* 214.1 (PL 38:1066); author's translation. See also *s.* 398.1.1. (= *symb. cat.*); *s.* 212.2; *f. et op.* 1.1.

had, as catechumens, learned Scripture in a wide variety of ways. They had, of course, heard the Scriptures proclaimed and had chanted the psalms, and they had listened to Augustine's long and frequent sermons, witnessing the way he had unfolded the Scriptures' twists and turns, the way he had elided disparate episodes through a cross-weave of verbal echoes, the way he had compressed complex themes into musical one-liners. In the routine of the catechumenate the emphasis had been depth over breadth. The journey had focused more on Scripture's nooks and crannies than its broad outlines. What the *competentes* needed at this juncture was to step back, to scan the horizon the Scriptures provided, and to drink in the terrain in a single glimpse.

The creed offered them just such a map of the biblical terrain. Its brevity meant that it marked out complex depths with a few highly evocative signposts. So Augustine, like Ambrose and Theodore, stressed the creed's compression: that from "just a few words, much insight is gained."[137] Yet its truths were much more than propositions one assented to; they were to shape one's practice and link one to a community of searchers. To dramatize this Augustine drew on and expanded an analogy Ambrose had used:

> It's called the Symbol because of a certain similarity, the word being transferred from commercial transactions, because merchants make agreements among themselves, called "symbols" which guarantee their loyalty to the terms of their association. And your association is concerned with spiritual merchandise, so that you may be like "dealers looking for a good pearl" (Mt 13:45). This pearl is "the charity which will be poured out in your hearts through the Holy Spirit who will be given to you" (Rom 5:5).[138]

Whereas Ambrose had used this financial analogy to warn of the perils of creedal fraud, Augustine used it to instill a sense of solidarity: that, by reciting this symbol, one vowed to fellow pilgrims to share in a common search for that pearl of great price, charity.

[137] *s.* 213.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:442); author's translation. See also *Enchiridion* 2.7.
[138] *s.* 212.1 (PL 38:1059); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:136.

After introductory comments of this sort, Augustine used to pause. The *notarii* who recorded these talks would stop writing, either marking the spot or breaking off altogether.[139] It was a solemn moment. Augustine then formally recited the creed slowly and in its entirety. The words were part of the hidden lore. Augustine reminded hearers that *symbolum* in Greek meant "password." In *Sermon* 213 he noted that "it's called a Symbol, because it's something by which Christians can recognize each other," and in *Sermon* 214 he said: "It is by confessing it, as by giving a password, that the faithful Christian can be recognized."[140]

After this Augustine gave a phrase-by-phrase exposition, treating the wording of the creed with the same minute attention he gave to the Scriptures. And he drew on his repertoire of rhetorical devices to communicate the creed's meaning. Let me highlight a few typical ones. He regularly used paradoxes, often set in sequence:

> Through this form of a servant the invisible one became visible
> because *he was born of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin*.
> Through this form of a servant the all-powerful became weak
> because *he suffered under Pontius Pilate*.
> Through this form of a servant the immortal one became mortal,
> because *he was crucified and died*.
> Through this form of a servant the king of ages
> *on the third day rose again. . . .*
> Through this form of a servant
> *he is going to come to judge the living and the dead,*
> the form which he chose to share with the dead,
> though he is the life of the living.[141]

[139] In *s.* 213.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:443), the *notarius* breaks off at the words "*hoc est symbolum*" and then picks up again, noting "*et post symbolum*." In *s.* 212.2 (PL 38:1060) the *notarius* breaks off completely after the sentence beginning "*Hoc est symbolum . . .*" See also the insertion in *s.* 214.1 (PL 38:1066).

[140] *s.* 213.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:443); 214.12 (PL 38:1072); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:141, 157. This idea appears in Rufinus of Aquileia, *Expositio symboli* 2. See Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 52–61.

[141] *s.* 212.1 (SC 116 [2003]:178); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:137 (modified). The italicized words here are the Creed's phrases.

This sequence served a dual purpose. Pedagogically it set the creed's individual phrases into memorable parallels (with the refrain "this form of a servant"), juxtaposing them with memorable antonyms ("invisible . . . visible," "all-powerful . . . weak," "immortal . . . mortal"). Theologically this joined event with meaning, setting in high relief the scope and scale of the divine condescension. Just as the mystery of Christ was paradoxical, so too was the mystery of the church. In *Sermon* 213 he noted that just as Mary gave birth to Christ and remained a virgin, so the church would give birth to the *competentes* and yet remain a virgin; by both births Christ was born: first as Head, then as members.[142] By this paradox he linked Christology with ecclesiology, Mariology with sacramental theology.

Second, Augustine used rhymes. In *Sermon* 214 he juxtaposed Christ's two births—from the Father and from Mary—and stressed the marvel of each:

Illa est de patre	This one is from the Father
sine matre,	without a mother;
ista de matre	that one is from a mother
sine patre:	without a father;
illa est sine aliquo tempore,	this one is outside time,
ista in acceptabili tempore:	that one, in an acceptable time;
illa aeterna,	this one is eternal,
ista opportuna:	that one, timely;
illa sine corpore	this one, without a body
in sinu patris,	in the heart of the Father;
ista cum corpore	that one, with a body
quo non uiolata	without violating
est uirginitas matris:	the virginity of the mother;
illa sine ullo sexu,	this one [happens] without sex;
ista sine ullo uirili complexu.	that one, without a man's embrace.[143]

In another case he used rhymed antitheses to teach how Christ's divinity gave his humanity a unique configuration:

[142] *s.* 213.8 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:447–48). See also *s.* 72A.7 (= *s. Denis* 25); *uirg.* 2.2.
[143] *s.* 214.6 (PL 38:1068); author's translation.

Nemo nostrum	None of us is born
quia uult nascitur	because we will it;
et nemo nostrum	and none of us dies
quando uult moritur;	when we will it.
ille quando uoluit	When [Christ] willed it,
natus est,	he was born,
quando uoluit	when he willed it,
mortuus est;	he died.
quomodo uoluit	Just as he willed it,
natus est de uirgine	he was born of a virgin;
quomodo uoluit	just as he willed it,
mortuus est in cruce.	he died on a cross.
Quidquid uoluit	Whatever he willed,
fecit	that he did
quia sic erat homo	because he was human
ut lateret deus,	such that God lay hidden,
susceptor deus,	God, the one assuming,
susceptus homo,	the human, the one assumed,
unus Christus deus et homo.	one Christ, God and human.[144]

Third, he employed figurative or allegorical interpretations. It was natural for Augustine to invoke biblical typologies in an exposition on the creed since he viewed it as a dense summary of biblical teaching. While discussing the meaning of the creedal phrase "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins" he wove a complex figuration linking the Exodus, the cross, and baptism:

> Your sins will be like the Egyptians following the Israelites, pursuing them, but only up to the Red Sea. What does "up to the Red Sea" mean? Up to the font consecrated by the cross and blood of Christ. Of course, what's red reddens. Don't you see how being part of Christ reddens [you]? Ask the eyes of faith. If you see the cross, then you should see the blood. If you see what hangs on the cross, then you should see what drips down from it. A lance pierced Christ's side, and our purchase price flowed forth. That's the reason baptism is signed with the sign of Christ, that is, the water where you are

[144] *s.* 398.8 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:191); author's translation.

> immersed and dyed and pass through as though through the Red Sea. Your sins are your enemies. They follow you, but only up to the Red Sea. Once you plunge in, you will escape. But those sins will be obliterated, just as the waters engulfed the Egyptians while the Israelites escaped on dry land.[145]

This explanation of baptism was one Augustine alluded to frequently, even in public sermons. Here he develops it at length. The turns he makes are easier to intuit than to analyze. The core were five themes already found paired within the New Testament itself: the Exodus and the cross; the cross and baptism; Exodus and baptism; the cross and forgiveness; baptism and forgiveness. Augustine here weaves these five originally distinct pairings into a complex, interlocking network of ideas, events, and images that nonetheless form a suggestive, memorable whole. The reddened water of the font—red perhaps because it was lined with red mosaic tiles—suggested both the Red Sea and the blood of the cross.[146] The immersion in the water both reenacted the passage through the Red Sea, a passage from slavery to freedom, and bathed one in the blood of Christ, marking a participation in his death. By this immersion and passage, sins would drown in the baptismal pool as the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, thus linking the action of baptism with the idea of forgiveness.

Fourth, Augustine appealed to analogies. In the sermon *On the Symbol* he played on three such analogies to explore the much-contested question of the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. To stress the equality of Father and Son he used a negative,

[145] *s.* 213.9 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:448); author's translation, *AOW*, 150. This same theme appears in *s.* 352.3, 6; *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4, 28.9; *en. Ps.* 80.38.

[146] Note the ambiguity of the phrase: "What's red reddens . . ." ("*Quod enim rubrum est, rubet.*"), *s.* 213.9 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:448). Augustine seems to play on the metaphor of dyeing clothes: the font is like a dyer's vat in which one is plunged and dyed red by Christ's blood; its indelible blood-red dye thus "tints" the baptized and "signifies" that one has become a member of Christ's body. Could the font in Hippo have been lined with red mosaic tiles, giving the water in the font something of a red tinge?

or inverse, analogy: "Will it be for us in his household as it is in a big house here, where there is a master and he has a son, so that we too should talk of the big Lord and master, and the little Lord and master? Avert your minds from any such thoughts."[147] Here the analogy articulates a disjunction between his audience's social experience and the divine reality. Later, to explain the Nicene idea that the Father's begetting of the Son did not imply a difference in nature but rather signaled an equality of nature, he resorted to a cluster of earthy, rather humorous, comparisons: "Consider mortal and earthly creatures; what each thing is, is what it begets. A human being doesn't beget an ox, a sheep doesn't beget a dog, or a dog a sheep. Whatever the begetter is, that is what it begets. So then, hold staunchly, firmly, faithfully onto this truth, that God the Father begot what he is himself, almighty. . . . A mortal begets what he is, the immortal begets what he is. . . . To this extent does he beget what he is, that the one begets the one, and therefore the only one."[148] Here the analogy highlighted a continuity of principle even though the order of being (creature vs. Creator) was radically different. He then appealed to a third analogy, playing on the Nicene image of "light from light" to explore the eternal simultaneity of Father and Son. He asked his audience to tell him "which generates which": does fire generate the firelight or does firelight generate the fire? The *competentes* then shouted: "fire the firelight, not firelight the fire." Augustine acknowledged their outcries, noting "an innate practical insight makes you all cry out." He then noted that the "very instant fire begins, immediately it brings forth firelight." Thus the Father begets the Son not in the pattern of older/younger that defines the relationship between human parents and their offspring. Rather, just as in the simultaneity of fire and firelight, so the Father's begetting of the Son is a reality for which there is no before and after. But, as Augustine notes, this analogy from nature only took one so far. While fires and firelight

[147] *s.* 398.4 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:187); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:447.
[148] *s.* 398.3 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:187); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:446.

are simultaneous, fires and firelight have beginnings, while God the Father and God the Son do not.[149]

These three analogies reflect Augustine's efforts to communicate essentials of Nicene orthodoxy. Augustine's target was the Homoians, an anti-Nicene group he would have encountered in Milan and would have heard Ambrose argue against; it would also be a group that, late in his career, Augustine faced off against directly. In this sermon he caricatured the Homoian position: "We don't introduce two gods, as some people do, who say, 'The Father is God, and the Son is God, but the Father is a big God, the Son a little God.' "[150] However odd these ideas may sound now, actual Homoians argued for a position not far from this. In one of their surviving pamphlets the anonymous author lists key perspectives on their hierarchical Trinity:

> 19. The Son adores and honors the Father; the Holy Spirit adores and honors the Son . . .
>
> 24. The Father is greater than the Son; the Son is incomparably great and better than the Spirit.
>
> 25. The Father is God and Lord for his Son; the Son is God and Lord for the Spirit . . .
>
> 27. There is, then, a distinction of the three substances: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and there is a difference of three realities: the unbegotten God, the only-begotten Son, and the advocate Spirit.[151]

Note the stark inequality within the Homoian trinity: the three Persons are "three substances" and "three different realities." Note also the way the Homoian author speaks of the Father as the Son's God and of the Son as an obedient second-in-command. These are the sorts of claims that Augustine and other pro-Nicenes feared and opposed. Augustine's sermons on the creed with their array of analogies were meant to counter exactly such propositions.

[149] *s.* 398.8 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:191); author's translation.

[150] *s.* 398.4 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:187); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:447.

[151] *Arian Sermon* 19, 24, 25, 27 (CSEL 92:37–40); trans. Roland J. Teske, *Arianism and Other Heresies*, WSA I/18:135.

Homoians were but one set of opponents whose views he warned against. There were others. Against pagans he insisted on the resurrection of the body—both Jesus' and ours—since "the resurrection of the dead distills our faith-life out from the faithless 'dead.' "[152] Against Manichees he insisted that the Creator did not create evil, that God "did not make [human beings] bad, because what he made them was human; because what he created was their nature, not their sins which are against nature."[153] Against the Apollinarians who claimed that the divine Word had replaced the human mind in Christ, Augustine insisted: "The Word assumed a complete human being, that is, a reason-imbued soul and body, so that the one Christ, the one Son of God, might not only be Word, but Word and human—this whole, this totality, is the Son of God the Father according to the Word and Son of Man according to his humanity."[154] The Donatists—because they were especially numerous and local opponents—were given special focus. Against

[152] *s.* 215.6 (PL 38:1075); author's translation.

[153] *s.* 214.3 (PL 38:1067); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:152.

[154] *s.* 214.6 (PL 38:1069); author's translation. Cf. *f. et op.* 5.8; *conf.* 7.19.25. Concerning the view of the human person that Augustine draws on here for his Christology, Brian E. Daley, "A Humble Mediator: Distinctive Elements in St. Augustine's Christology," *Word and Spirit* 9 (1987): 100–117, at 103–4, notes: "Drawing on the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition—the tradition that was for him the key to making intellectual sense of the Christian Gospel—Augustine understood the human soul to be a complete spiritual substance, independent of the body it vivifies, in control of the body, yet existing sufficient to itself. The soul, he assumed, is incorporeal, always engaged in knowledge and desire, immune to death and dissolution; more important, perhaps, it is the soul that is the real 'self' of a person, a person's subjective and unifying center. Throughout his career, then, Augustine seems to have seen it as metaphysically necessary . . . that the human soul of Christ should be the connecting link, the point of contact, between the divine Logos, the creative 'mind' of God, and Jesus the man." See also idem, "Word, Soul and Flesh: Origen and Augustine on the Person of Christ," *Augustinian Studies* 36 (2005): 299–326. On Apollinarius see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2d rev. ed., trans. John Bowden (London: Mowbray, 1975), 220–37 and 322–28; Brian E. Daley, " 'Heavenly Man' and 'Eternal Christ': Apollinarius and Gregory of Nyssa on the Personal Identity of the Savior," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 469–88.

the Donatist policy of rebaptizing Catholics, Augustine insisted that rebaptism was horribly wrong, that baptism left an indelible "character" in the same way that Roman soldiers received a tattoo marking them as soldiers.[155] Against Donatist claims that only Africa had the true church, Augustine insisted on the church's catholicity, that it included "as many of us as are here . . . in this city, as many as there are in this region, as many as there are in this province, as many as there are also across the sea, as many as there are in the whole wide world."[156] Finally, against Donatist claims about the pristine holiness of the church, Augustine insisted that while the church can be described as holy, it nonetheless "tolerates the wicked in the communion of the sacraments . . . for the sake of her grains now groaning among the chaff."[157]

Augustine knew that whenever his *competentes* strolled through the marketplace they could well rub shoulders with any of these—pagans and Manichees, Homoians and Donatists—and these encounters could lead to an exchange of jibes or a heated religious debate. So in his sermons on the creed he sought to arm his hearers, telling them to think of the creed as "your armor against adversity."[158] It was both a weapon for warding off opponents and a tool for discernment, to help them sort through competing claims about God, the world, the church and sacraments. It marked off what was essential and set out a core that publicly distinguished orthodox Christians from their competitors. It served as a "password" for demonstrating one's own orthodoxy.[159] It was also a tool for introspection: "Treat your creed as your own personal mirror. Observe yourself there."[160]

[155] *s.* 398.8.16 (= *symb. cat.*; CCL 46:199). On the idea of baptism as a military tattoo see *De baptismo* 1.4.5; *ep.* 185.43.

[156] *s.* 213.8 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:447); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:144–45.

[157] *s.* 214.11 (PL 38:1071); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:157.

[158] *s.* 58.13 (CCL 41Aa:213); author's translation. See also *f. et op.* 1.1.

[159] *s.* 214.12 (PL 38:1072); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:157. Cf. Rufinus, *Expositio symboli* 2.

[160] *s.* 58.13 (CCL 41Aa:213); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:124–25.

Augustine, as usual, attended to hearers' feelings. He knew that discussing the meaning of Christ as the "judge of the living and the dead" would rouse the *competentes*' deepest fears. North Africans tended to think of God as a fearsome judge. It was a view Augustine both shared and modified. Here he offered the *competentes* a quite different and moving counterimage:

> If you were to have a case scheduled before some judge and you contacted a lawyer, you would be upheld, supported by the lawyer, and he would act on your case as best he could. And if, before he finished [preparing your case], you hear that he's going to come as the judge, how you would rejoice! For the very one who just a little while ago was your lawyer is now going to be your judge! Now [Christ] Himself pleads for us, He Himself intervenes on our behalf. We have Him as our Lawyer, our advocate. Why should we fear Him as Judge? No, because we have sent Him on ahead as our Lawyer, we rest in the secure hope He will be our Judge.[161]

Here analogy becomes parable. Augustine joins two biblical images, Christ as judge and Christ as advocate, but in joining them he gives them an unexpected slant. He draws on an image from the letter to the Hebrews—that Christ as high priest pleads for us—and converts it into a juridical image (cf. John 14:16): that Christ pleads for us as a lawyer. He then adds a twist: that Christ our lawyer does double duty by serving simultaneously as judge. Thus *competentes* would not get an impartial trial but a biased one, one rigged in their favor. With this imagistic sleight of hand Augustine sought to counterbalance the old fearsome image of Christ's judgment and make it an icon of the radical mercy of God. By it he hoped to quell the *competentes*' fears and at the same time adjust their unconscious image of God.

TWO WINGS OF PRAYER: THE OUR FATHER

One week before the Easter Vigil, Augustine would test the *competentes*' ability to recite the creed. On one occasion some did not fare well. Augustine told them not to panic; they still had a week

[161] *s.* 213.6 (= *s. Guelf.* 1; MA 1:446); author's translation, *AOW*, 149.

to master it.[162] Sometime that same day they were given a second treasure: the Lord's Prayer.[163] This "handing-over of the prayer" (*traditio orationis*), like the ceremonies surrounding the creed, took place within a liturgical setting. Once again we do not know whether this rite was inserted into the regular liturgy or was a free-standing rite. We do know that some of the faithful attended, for on one occasion Augustine turned to them and gave them a brief exhortation.[164] We also know that during this rite a gospel text, Matthew 6:7-15, was read and, in fact, served as the medium for the formal handing-over of the prayer.[165] After the reading Augustine would give a brief sermon on it, explaining it line by line, much as he did with the creed. Four of these have come down to us: *Sermons* 56–59. The *competentes* were to memorize the Lord's Prayer as they had the creed, and they would also be expected to hand it back sometime on Holy Saturday—though this handing-back of the prayer seems to have occurred separately from the solemn handing-back of the creed.[166] Augustine reassured the *competentes* that memorizing the prayer would pose few problems, for while the faithful might hear the creed spoken aloud only three times a year, "the Lord's Prayer, you see, is said every day in the Church at God's altar, and the faithful hear it."[167]

[162] *s.* 58.1 (CCL 41Aa:199); author's translation.

[163] On the mystagogical character of these sermons see William Harmless, "'. . . receive today how you are to call upon God' (*s.* 58.1): The Lord's Prayer and Augustine's Mystagogy," in *Seeing Through the Eyes of Faith: The Mystagogy of the Church Fathers*, ed. Paul van Geest (Louvain: Peeters, 2014). The timing of the rite can be pieced together from comments in *s.* 58.1, 58.13, 59.1, 213.8 (= *s. Guelf.* 1.9). See Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 65; Pierre-Patrick Verbraken et al., *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Sermones in Matthaeum*, CCL 41Aa (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 149–51.

[164] *s.* 58.7 (CCL 41Aa:205).

[165] *s.* 58.1 (CCL 41Aa:199).

[166] *s.* 59.1 (CCL 41Aa:221). See also *s.* 227. In *s.* 58.13, Augustine distinguishes the two *redditiones*. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 11.1, had insisted that the Lord's Prayer "be learned and kept in memory by those who come near to the faith of baptism."

[167] *s.* 58.12 (CCL 41Aa:212); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:124. The three times that the faithful might have heard the creed were: (1) the *traditio symboli* two weeks

These sermons give the first clear example of this North African rite, though it is quite possible that Tertullian's sermon *On Prayer* and Cyprian's treatise *On the Lord's Prayer* were prompted by it.[168] Because of this local tradition, Augustine's catechetical calendar differed from that of his mentor. As we saw earlier, Ambrose (and Cyril) explained the Lord's Prayer not during Lent but during Easter Week and did so because of its place within the liturgy of the Eucharist. Augustine's timetable was more like that of his contemporary Theodore of Mopsuestia, who explained the Lord's Prayer during Lent and linked it with the creed as part of the necessary spiritual equipment for baptism. And there was, as we will see in the next chapter, a simple reason for teaching on the Lord's Prayer *before* baptism: in North Africa one of the first acts of the newly baptized when they stepped forth from the font was to pray the Lord's Prayer.

Augustine typically began his catechesis by correlating the creed with the Lord's Prayer. He did so because he believed that these two traditions, like all liturgical traditions, arose from and reflected some subtle inner logic. And as Augustine saw it, these two—both their content and order of delivery—flowed from a logic voiced by the apostle Paul: "How then shall they call upon [God] in whom they have not believed?" (Rom 10:14). According to Augustine this meant: "You didn't first receive the prayer and then later the creed, but first the creed, so that you would know what you are to believe, and later the prayer, where you come to know whom you are to call upon. So the creed has to do with the faith, the prayer with

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before Easter, (2) the preliminary *redditio symboli* one week before Easter, and (3) the solemn *redditio symboli* on Holy Saturday.

[168] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen: On the Lord's Prayer* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 22–24, argues that such a rite existed in North Africa in the third century and that Tertullian's and Cyprian's works are evidence of it. Both refer to the Eucharist in a way that presumes that the audience knew its shape. This could imply that the audience was solely the baptized or that the *disciplina arcani* did not have the same strictures in the third century. Whatever their original oral form, both works have been reworked for purposes of publication.

the appeal."[169] For Augustine the creed gave the "what" of right belief, while the Lord's Prayer gave the "to whom" and "how" of right praise.[170]

Like his predecessors, Augustine insisted that the Lord's Prayer was *the* model of Christian prayer. Like them, he noted its compact form and argued that "the first thing our Lord did was to cut out longwindedness" and that one needed to stop "presenting God with a flood of words"; what mattered was "devotedness . . . not wordiness."[171] As Augustine saw it, the heart was the focus: "When you say this, make sure that you also say it from the heart," and the words themselves "give us the framework of our desires."[172] He would play on the dual meaning of "petition" (*prex*)—both a genre of prayer and a legal term—and expand on his paradoxical image of Christ as lawyer and as judge: "We have a real hope of winning our lawsuit when a jurist of that stature has dictated the petition for us. . . . Well, he is our advocate, and he is going to be our judge."[173]

After this introduction he noted the prayer's opening words: that Christians dared to call God "Father": "With these words you, as you can see, have begun to have God as your Father. You certainly will have him as such, when you have been born—although even now, before you are born, you have already been conceived by his seed, to be duly brought forth from the womb of the Church, that is to say, in the font."[174] Here he plays on the idea of Lent as a time in the womb and describes the *competentes*' praying the Lord's Prayer as a birthright extended to the unborn still within the church's womb. On another occasion he resorted to an antithetical analogy and contrasted Roman anxieties over large families

[169] *s.* 56.1 (CCL 41Aa:153–54); author's translation. This explanation appears in the *exordium* of each of the four: *s.* 57.1, 58.1, 59.1. Cf. *ench.* 2.7.

[170] *ench.* 1.2-3 (CCL 46:49).

[171] *s.* 56.4 (CCL 41Aa:156); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:97.

[172] *s.* 56.5, 4 (CCL 41Aa:156); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:97.

[173] *s.* 58.1 (CCL 41Aa:199); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:118 (modified).

[174] *s.* 56.5 (CCL 41Aa:156); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:97. See also *s.* 59.3. Augustine sometimes claimed that only the baptized could pray the Lord's Prayer: *symb. cat.* 8.16; *s.* 181.6.

with the church's marital abandon: "Parents sometimes, when they have one son, or two or three, are afraid to produce any more, in case they condemn them to live by begging. But the inheritance which [God] promises is such that many can obtain it without any of them being put in a bind; that's why he invited the gentile peoples into his family brotherhood, and why the only Son has innumerable brothers and sisters, who can say, 'Our Father who art in heaven.' "[175] Augustine's hearers knew well why Romans practiced birth control and infanticide: they did not want family wealth divided up between too many beneficiaries. As Augustine saw it, since the inheritance won by Christ knew no such human limits, the church did not need to exercise such marital restraint. Moreover, calling God "Father" had implications for the social order: "Now we say 'Our Father' all together; what all-embracing generosity! The emperor says it, the beggar says it; the slave says it, his master says it. They all say together 'Our Father who art in heaven.' So they must realize that they are brothers, since they all have one Father. The master must not scorn to have as a brother the slave of his whom the Lord Christ was willing to have as a brother."[176] Here Augustine followed the tenor of social critique found in Paul's letter to Philemon. While he did not overtly denounce the institution of slavery, he insisted that the Christ-event required a countercultural understanding of human dignity.

Augustine then took up the petitions of the Lord's Prayer one by one. To aid the *competentes*' understanding he suggested a mnemonic: that "all these petitions add up to seven, three referring to eternal life, four to the present life."[177] Augustine, like Cyprian, read the first three in a parallel manner. He claimed that prayer would not make God's name holy, nor would it bring on the coming kingdom, nor would it cause God's will to be done. These were simply present facts or future inevitabilities, and prayer did noth-

[175] *s.* 57.2 (CCL 41Aa:179); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:109–10 (modified). A similar antithetical analogy discussing adoption habits occurs in *Io. eu. tr.* 2.13.

[176] *s.* 58.2 (CCL 41Aa:200); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:118 See also *s.* 59.2.

[177] *s.* 59.8 (CCL 41Aa:226); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:129. See also *s.* 56.19; 57.6; 58.12; *ench.* 30.115; *s. dom. m.* 2.10.36.

ing to alter them. Rather ,"we pray for ourselves, not for God."[178] This meant that one asked not that God's name be holy but that "what is always holy may be hallowed in us"; not that the kingdom come but that "what is going to come for all the saints may also come for us"; not that God's will be done but that "we too may carry out God's commands out of love."[179]

Augustine read the phrase "give us this day our daily bread" figuratively, seeing in Jesus' words a dense cluster of meanings. He claimed that "daily bread" meant not only bread itself but all the necessities of life: food and drink, clothing and shelter.[180] At the same time and with the same phrase one asked for the "bread of the Word"—whether as lections proclaimed, hymns sung, or sermons preached—as well as for the Eucharist, which "is our daily bread."[181] In mentioning Eucharist, he remained, because of the *disciplina arcani*, deliberately vague and said only that after baptism they would receive "what the faithful receive."[182] The climax of his exposition turned from the here and now to end-time. Augustine framed this with a rhetorical question: "Are we going to go on receiving the Eucharist when we have come to Christ himself and when we have begun to reign with him forever?"[183] The obvious answer was "no." So he added: "But when we finally get there, do you imagine we shall be listening to a book? We shall be seeing the Word itself, listening to the Word itself, eating it, drinking it, as the angels do now. Do the angels need books, or lectures, or readers? Or course not. They read by seeing, since they see Truth itself, and drink their fill from that fountain, from what we are sprinkled with."[184] This transposing to the eschatological is classic Augustine.

[178] *s.* 57.4 (CCL 41Aa:180); author's translation. Cf. Cyprian, *De oratione dominica* 12-14.

[179] *s.* 59.3-5 (CCL 41Aa:222); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:127. See also *s.* 56.5-7, 57.3-6, 58.3-4.

[180] *s.* 57.7 (CCL 41Aa:183). See also *s.* 56.10, 59.6.

[181] *s.* 57.7 (CCL 41Aa:184); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:112. See also *s.* 56.10, 58.5, 59.6; *s. dom. m.* 2.7.25-27; *ench.* 30.115.

[182] *s.* 56.10 (CCL 41Aa:161); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:100.

[183] *s.* 57.7 (CCL 41Aa:183–84); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:112.

[184] *s.* 57.7 (CCL 41Aa:184); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:112.

He regularly contrasted the slow piecemeal way we hear or read words with the radical unfathomable immediacy of savoring the mystery of Christ the Word.[185] Angels "don't require the words of a long-drawn-out speech, but they drink their fill of the single Word."[186]

In his sermons on the Lord's Prayer, Augustine focused especially on the petition "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." No other petition gets such sustained attention. *Sermon* 59, for example, is nineteen paragraphs long; exposition of this phrase takes up seven of these. Why so much emphasis here? In part, Augustine discerned, his congregation suffered one singularly destructive vice: a thirst for revenge. In one Lenten sermon he offered a vivid glimpse of the way this revenge ethic suffused North African piety: "I know that people come every day, kneel down, bang their foreheads on the ground, sometimes wash their faces with tears, and in all this humility and distress of soul, say: 'Lord, avenge me, kill my enemy.' "[187] This vice was Augustine's moral *bête noir*: "*the* great temptation is when we are being incited to avenge ourselves. A man is wild with and straining at the leash for vengeance."[188] While Augustine had his eye on local mores, he was equally attuned to the biblical text under his gaze. Jesus, after giving his disciples the prayer, had added, "If you do not forgive people their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins" (Matt 6:14), and so Augustine sought to mirror Jesus' stress: "Our Master and Savior was well aware of the danger of such a temptation in this life, and that's why, after teaching us the six or seven petitions of this prayer, the only one he chose to comment on and to impress upon us more forcefully was this one."[189]

[185] This is a commonplace in Augustine: *f. et sym.* 3.3-3.4; *Io. eu. tr.* 1.8-12; *trin.* 15.11.20, 15.14.24-15.15.25; *s.* 293A.5-15 (= *s. Dolbeau* 3). See Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 82–86.

[186] *s.* 59.6 (CCL 41Aa:224); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:128.

[187] *s.* 211.6 (PL 38:1054–58); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:132.

[188] *s.* 57.11 (CCL 41Aa:188); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:114–15.

[189] *s.* 57.12 (CCL 41Aa:189–90); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:115.

Augustine argued that the pathway that rescues one from the revenge ethic that dominated his culture was to see one's enemy with divine eyes:

> After all, what good do you get from things going wrong with your enemy? . . . Wish him well, he stops being wrong, and he won't be an enemy. . . . [H]e's the same as you; you have a soul, he has a soul; you have flesh, he has flesh. He's of the same stuff as you are; you were both made together from earth by the Lord, both quickened by him. He is exactly what you are too; look on him as your brother. In the beginning our two parents were Adam and Eve, he our father, she our mother; so we are brothers. Forget about the original beginning: God is our father, the Church is our mother; so we are brothers.[190]

Augustine recognized that hatred and violence thrive if one can demonize one's enemy. We today are aware how during wars politicians and propagandists use rhetoric to demonize enemies, to dehumanize them. Only a dehumanized enemy is kill-able. So Augustine, in his Lenten sermons, worked to *de*-demonize the enemy, to insist that one see the enemy with divine eyes, to see his or her humanity. He wanted his hearers to savor the life-altering moral vision embedded in Jesus' words. More precisely, he wanted to instill in his hearers a new vision of what it means to be human.

We saw that Augustine had described Jesus as a jurist. With this petition he stressed the "legal" implications: "We are making a bargain with God, an agreement and a contract."[191] Augustine used to portray how disputes over this "contract" could play themselves out within an imagined divine courtroom. He also exploited a favorite rhetorical device: role-playing both sides of a dialogue. In this case he role-plays how God, in the divine courtroom, speaks to the unforgiving: "This is the sort of thing God says to you: 'You are right to ask pardon from me, being as I am quite unable to sin. While no sin can be found in me, I pardon others

[190] *s.* 56.14 (CCL 41Aa:165–66); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:103.
[191] *s.* 56.13 (CCL 41Aa:164–65); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:102.

all the same—and *you* are unwilling to pardon. Very well then, I grant you are within your rights—don't pardon. So take very good care that I don't find anything in you for which I am forced to take vengeance.' "[192] Augustine then switches roles and articulates the victim's retort to God the judge: "'But I won't pardon,' you say; 'I want revenge.'" Augustine then steps out of character and spells out the logic of the prayer's contractual obligations: "Be careful that vengeance isn't taken on you. You want a sin against you to be avenged, you, a human being with sins of your own. See to it that the one in whom no sin can be found doesn't take vengeance on you."[193]

Augustine did not simply unfurl the words of the Lord's Prayer; he also unfurled the liturgical gesture, the ancient *orans* position. He compared the outstretched arms of the one praying to a bird's wings and noted that if one hopes for one's prayer to take flight to God one must have "two wings, twin acts of kindness." He invoked Jesus' words from the Lukan sermon on the plain: "Forgive and it will be forgiven you, give and it will be given you" (Luke 6:37-38). So one wing is forgiving one's enemy; the other "wing" is the outstretched hand that gives to the poor.[194] The Lord's Prayer was not just a prayer to be said; it was a prayer to be enacted. Augustine situated this with a shipping metaphor, one especially vivid to his congregation since many worked in the shipping business in the port of Hippo Regius. He compared praying the Lord's Prayer to manning a ship's bilge pumps: "Those who are baptized and hold on to this life contract things due to human frailty. Even if from these they're not shipwrecked, the bilge pumps must be used, for if the pumps are not used, there's a gradual leaking that can sink the whole ship. By this prayer, the bilgewater gets pumped out. What's more, we should not only pray, but give alms as well. For when we use bilge pumps to stop the ship from sinking, we work with both voices and hands."[195] Thus the Lord's Prayer is

[192] *s.* 59.7 (CCL 41Aa:225); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:129.
[193] *s.* 59.7 (CCL 41Aa:225–26); trans. Hill, WSA III/3:129 (modified).
[194] *s.* 56.11 (CCL 41Aa:161–62); author's translation, *AOW*, 152–53.
[195] *s.* 56.11 (CCL 41Aa:161–62); author's translation, *AOW*, 152–53.

both voiced and enacted, and its enactment must spill into the ordinary, everyday flow of living as a Christian.

LENT AND THE MIDWIFE'S ART

At this juncture, perhaps more than others, one senses the chasm between the ancient and the modern experience of Christianity. One confronts themes that play upon ancient Christianity's demonology, its sometimes austere views on the human body, its religious infighting and intolerance, its language of soldiery and slavery. This thought world was one Augustine both shared in and altered—moderating some trends, radicalizing others—and his views, both positive and negative, would figure prominently within the trajectory taken by later Latin Christianity. The task at this juncture is not to assess this legacy but to understand how Augustine actually used these themes and what he meant by them and to see—as much as can be seen—Augustine as a teacher of fifth-century *competentes*.

For the *competentes* in Hippo, Lent was time in the womb, and like any pregnancy it would be both a delicate and a dangerous moment. It was, in anthropological parlance, a "liminal" or threshold phase during which they found themselves marked off—physically, socially, ritually—as people in transition. According to Augustine and the tradition he inherited from the New Testament, the *competentes* were being "rescued from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's dazzling light" (1 Pet 2:9). It was a drama with cosmological implications. Because of this, patristic Christianity erected around the *competentes* a complex ritual, disciplinary, and catechetical apparatus that would, by turns, ease and provoke their passage. It would be a transition at once awesome and eerie, a time of unmaking and remaking, of sloughing off the old and marking out the new. It also meant entering into terrible ambiguity: not knowing what one would be on the other side. Not surprisingly, the *competentes* experienced what Augustine himself had experienced: excitement and fear, sharp-eyed zeal and self-searching doubts.

In this transition Augustine played midwife, mixing firmness and gentleness: on the one hand calling them not to flee the labor

pangs, and on the other hand encouraging them to look forward and love the new self coming to birth. The core curriculum had, it seems, a twofold movement. The *competentes* themselves performed certain actions: (i) bodily exercises (fasting, abstaining from bathing and sex, vigils); (ii) introspective exercises (prayer, assessing the past, forgiving wrongs endured); and (iii) social exercises (almsgiving, begging pardon). The faithful—sometimes the laity, sometimes the ministers— also performed certain acts: (i) bearing witness through their presence at liturgies and through their routine living-out of the Gospel; (ii) expressing solidarity by prayer and by taking on, as much as possible, the same ascetical discipline; (iii) scrutinizing the *competentes*' way of life, even their physical health; (iv) exorcising them with invocations, imprecations, and exsufflation. It was thoroughgoing enough that Augustine and his contemporaries thought of it more along the lines of a boot camp or fitness program than schooling. They presupposed that *competentes* were the spiritually flabby, that they suffered from any of a host of addictions, and that these ailments had penetrated every fiber of their lives and could be healed only with a radical reshaping of habit that touched the whole person: physical, psychological, intellectual, social.

Within this complex educative process verbal catechesis played a part. We know more about the highlights—catecheses on the scrutiny, creed, and Lord's Prayer—than the daily routine. But we do know that in all his catecheses, whether public or private, Augustine fashioned a cross-weave of doctrine and moral admonition. On the one hand he sought to interpret the meaning of conversion, particularly as it played itself out within the disciplines and the rites of scrutiny. As before, he taught with images—from warfare, slavery, business, seafaring, agriculture, jurisprudence, athletics. And as before, he exploited rhetorical devices—paradoxes, aphorisms, rhymes, antitheses—to make his message memorable. He would stress, by turns, the struggle of conversion and the gratuity of God's action. He would play on dichotomous images from the New Testament and insist that baptism meant new life, a passage from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. Yet he balanced these images with developmental ones, insisting that conversion

was lifelong, that one only slowly acquired virtue. He also moved against inherited views and insisted that baptism marked the forgiveness of sin, not its end, that this coming-to-birth needed to be set within an eschatological horizon, and that on this side of eschaton the church would remain a mix of wheat and chaff.

Lent also served catechetically as a time for integration, for sorting out the essential from the peripheral. Thus Augustine, following local tradition, would hand on two brief compendia: the creed, the "what" of right belief, and the Lord's Prayer, the "how" of right praise. These he asked his hearers to memorize—all the while insisting that one was not just memorizing words but taking their truth to heart. Yet they were more. The creed was a covenant that bound the *competentes* together, joining them as fellow seekers in a common search for God and for the pearl of charity. It also aided self-understanding: it was a password to certify membership, a mirror for introspection, armor against outsiders. In his catecheses on the creed Augustine led the *competentes* through familiar terrain, the biblical landscape. He mapped it not as he had done when they first entered the catechumenate, that is, by sketching the broad lines of the biblical narrative; rather, he highlighted its subliminal threads and fundamental presuppositions.

As before, Augustine focused on the heart: encouraging fervor, soothing certain anxieties, stirring up others. He also sought to forge bonds of solidarity—binding his ministry to theirs, and theirs with his and with one another's. Together they were fellow new recruits who shared a common quest and a common process of conversion. Yet Augustine's core concern was Christian living. He thus called the *competentes* to forge a *habitus* of faith and to imitate seasoned veterans. He worried much about social habits: sexual standards, civil rancor, indifference to the plight of the poor. And he insisted that if their prayer was to take flight they would have to help rectify this broken social order. Ultimately, his criterion was a simple one: that the *competentes* begin to live lives that resonated in harmony with baptism, that they bear witness to a faith that labored in love.

Chart 9

Sermons to *Competentes*

Sermon	Latin Text	Translation
1. Lenten Discipline (to whole assembly, beginning of Lent)		
Sermon 205	PL 38: 1039–40	WSA III/6: 103–5
Sermon 206	PL 38: 1041–42	WSA III/6: 106–8
Sermon 207	PL 38: 1042–44	WSA III/6: 109–11
Sermon 208	PL 38: 1044–46	WSA III/6: 112–14
Sermon 209	PL 38: 1046–47	WSA III/6: 115–17
Sermon 210	PL 38: 1047–54	WSA III/6: 118–27
*De utilitate ieiunii = s. 400**	CCL 46: 231–41	WSA III/10: 471–83
2. Scrutiny: to the competentes, *probably early in Lent*		
Sermon 216	PL 38: 1076–82	WSA III/6: 167–76
3. Traditio symboli: *to the* competentes, *two weeks before Easter Vigil*		
Sermon 212	SC 116 (2003): 174–84	WSA III/6: 136–39
Sermon 213 = s. Guelf 1	MA 1: 441–50	WSA III/6: 140–49
Sermon 214	RB 72 (1962): 14–21	WSA III/6: 150–59
De symbolo ad catechumenos = s. 398	CCL 46: 185–99	WSA III/10: 445–57
4. Redditio symboli: *to the* competentes, *one week before Easter Vigil*		
Sermon 215	RB 68 (1958): 18–25	WSA III/6: 160–66
5. Traditio orationis: *to the* competentes, *one week before Easter Vigil*		
Sermon 56	CCL 41Aa: 153–71	WSA III/3: 95–108
Sermon 57	CCL 41Aa: 178–91	WSA III/3: 109–17
Sermon 58	CCL 41Aa: 199–213	WSA III/3: 118–25
Sermon 59	CCL 41Aa: 221–27	WSA III/3: 126–31
6. Other sermons in which competentes *are addressed*		
Sermon 5	CCL 41: 50–60	WSA III/1: 216–26
Sermon 352	PL 39: 1549–60	WSA III/10: 137–51
Sermon 392	PL 39: 1710–13	WSA III/10: 421–25

*Note: *De utilitate ieiunii* may or may not be a Lenten sermon

Chart 10

Other References to the Training of *Competentes*

Sermon / Treatise / Letter	Text	Translation	Topic
Sermon 227	PL 38: 1100	WSA III/6: 254–55	Fasting, exorcism, *traditio orationis*
Sermon 228.3	PL 38: 1102	WSA III/6: 258	Lenten catecheses on creed & Lord's Prayer
Sermon 229.1 = s. Denis 6	MA 1: 30	WSA III/6: 255	Lenten discipline: Give in names, fasting, exorcism
Sermon 229A.2 = s. Guelf 7	MA 1: 463	WSA III/6: 269–70	Lenten discipline: Fasting, vigils, exorcism
Sermon 351.2	PL 39: 1537	WSA III/10:120	Penitence of *competentes*
Tractate on the Gospel of John 98.5	CCL 36: 579	FOTC 90: 213	Creed & Lord's Prayer handed over to *competentes*
Against Faustus 30.5	CSEL 25: 753	WSA I/20: 404	Faithful join in Lenten discipline with *competentes*
Against Julian, an Incomplete Work 1.399	CSEL 85: 498	WSA I/25: 379	*Exsufflatio* as gesture of exorcism
Confessions 8.2.5	CCL 27: 116	WSA I/1: 188–89	Victorinus and the *redditio symboli* in Rome
Confessions 9.6.14	CCL 27: 140	WSA I/1: 218	Augustine, Alypius, Adeodatus "turned in names"
Enchiridion 2.7	CCL 46: 51	ACW 3: 14	Memorize Creed and Lord's Prayer
On the Agreement of the Evangelists 2.4.9	CSEL 43: 90	NPNF 6: 107	40 days of Lent
On the Care of the Dead 12.15	CSEL 41: 644–46	FOTC 27: 370–72	Story of Curma
On the City of God 15.20	CCL 48: 485	WSA I/7: 170	Standing / stepping on *cilicium*
On Faith and Works 6.8	CSEL 41: 43	WSA I/8: 231	Investigation of candidates; overview of training
On Faith and Works 6.9	CSEL 41: 44	WSA I/8: 231	High-pitched excitement of *competentes*
On Faith and Works 7.11	CSEL 41: 48	WSA I/8: 234	Lenten catechesis crossweaves faith and admonitions

Chart 10—Cont'd

Other References to the Training of *Competentes*

Sermon / Treatise / Letter	Text	Translation	Topic
On Faith and the Creed 1.1	CSEL 41: 3–4	WSA I/8: 155	Creed handed over, memorized before baptism
On the Greatness of the Soul 34.77	CSEL 39.1: 224	ACW 9: 106	Ambrose's Lenten teaching
Letter 54.10	CCL 31: 233	WSA II/1: 214	Bathing on Holy Thursday
Letter 258.4-5	CSEL 57: 608–10	WSA II/ 4: 195–96	Call to turn in name for baptism

Chart 11

Creeds found in Augustine's Sermons

1. *Creed of Milan*: reconstructed from *Sermones* 213-214 (also *Sermo* 212?) by J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3d ed., 173; cf. Suzanne Poque, SC 116: 63–64.

Credimus in deum patrem omnipotentem;
Et in Iesum Christum, filium eius unicum, dominum nostrum,
qui natus de Spiritu sancto et Maria virgine,
passus est sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus et sepultus;
tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,
ascendit in caelum,
sedet ad dexteram patris,
inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos;
et in Spirtum sanctum,
sanctam ecclesiam,
remissionem peccatorum,
carnis resurrectionem.

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2. *Creed of Hippo*: reconstructed from *Sermo* 215 (cf. *s.* 212) by Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 176:

Credimus in deum patrem omnipotentem, universorum creatorem,
regem saeculorum, immortalem et invisibilem;
Credimus et in filium eius Iesum Christum dominum nostrum,
natus de Spiritu sancto ex virgine Maria,
crucifixum sub Pontio Pilato, mortuum et sepultum
[qui] tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,
ascendit ad caelos,
sedet ad dexteram dei patris
inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos
Credimus et in Spirtum sanctum
remissionem peccatorum,
resurrectionem carnis,
et vitam aeternam per sanctam ecclesiam.

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3. *Creed of Milan* (variant), reconstructed from *De symbolo ad catechumenos* (= *s.* 396), by Roland Vander Plaetse, "Praefatio," CCL 46: 181:

Credimus in deum patrem omnipotentem
et in Iesum Christum filium eius unicum, dominum nostrum,
natus de Spiritu sancto et uirgine Maria,
passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus et sepultus,
ascendit in caelum,
sedet ad dexteram patris;
inde venturus iudicare vivos et mortuos;
et in Spirtum sanctum,
sanctam ecclesiam,
remissionem peccatorum,
resurrectionem carnis, in uitam aeternam.

CHAPTER 7

Mystagogy: Baking Bread, Fermenting Wine

Around the year 403 a man named Januarius wrote Augustine and asked about certain liturgical practices.[1] One particularly bothered him: that the celebration of the Lord's Passion did not come around on the same day each year and that this shifting date was tied to the phases of the moon. This seemed reminiscent of a paganism that tied human fate to the stars or of a Manicheism that saw its myths played out in planetary movements.[2] Augustine answered Januarius with two long letters and, in the second, focused on the meaning and practice of Easter. Augustine took pains to distance Christian practice from any foreign taint. He argued that watching the coursings of the moon or stars or planets might have legitimate ends: farmers watched the heavens to forecast the weather; pilots of ships used them to steer by; so did nomads who "cross through sandy desert in the interior regions to the south" where no sure path lay. According to Augustine, the church saw the movements of the heavens as "parables." It believed that God

[1] The two letters, *ep.* 54 and 55 (also known as *Ad inquisitiones Ianuarii*), have traditionally been dated to around 400; Pierre-Marie Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, CEASA 163 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 95–103, now argues for a dating of 403 CE.

[2] *ep.* 55.2 (CCL 31:234–35). In this letter Augustine grapples with the implications of the liturgical calendar vis-à-vis cosmological claims from paganism and Manichaeism, but he also touches on the church's links to Judaism (which used a lunar calendar for determining certain festivals). The shifting date of Easter raised the question of Christianity's Jewish roots and reminded Christians like Januarius of objections from pagan critics such as Porphyry of Gaza and the emperor Julian, who argued that Christians were merely apostate Jews.

had inscribed in creation a sort of eloquence that could woo people inward and upward, and that this had been adapted to the giving out of sacraments. Thus the church drew on this eloquence in creation. It did so sparingly in its rites, using things such as water, wheat, wine, oil. But it did so much more freely in its catechesis, drawing on "the rest of creation, the winds, the sea, the earth, birds, fishes, animals, trees, and human beings."[3]

Augustine's baptismal candidates would taste this earthy, parabolic eloquence of rite and word with unusual intensity during Easter and the week that followed. According to Augustine the Easter *triduum*—or "Pasch" as he called it—was a "solemnity," that is, a religious celebration held annually.[4] Christmas was one as well, for it recalled a historical event, the birth of Christ, and was "marked by devout festivity." Similarly, at Easter the Christian community as community called to mind what happened—that is, that Christ died and rose again. Yet Easter was not only a solemnity but also a "sacrament"—and in a way that Christmas was not. This was because Easter not only celebrated that Christ died but that he "died *for our sins*," not only that he rose again but that "he rose again *for our justification*." Thus the community did not simply celebrate Pasch; rather, "we enact Pasch." Since the Pasch of Christ was a passing over, a passage from death to life, the Christian community likewise passed over:

> This passing-over is enacted in us only through faith—which works in us for the forgiveness of sins with hope of life eternal for those who love God and neighbor. . . . In accord with this faith and hope and love by which we begin to come under grace, we die together with Christ and are buried with him through baptism, as the Apostle says, "because our old self has been crucified with him" (Rom 6:6) and we have risen again with him because "he has raised us up together and seated us with him in the heavens" (Eph 2:6).[5]

[3] *ep.* 55.13 (CCL 31:244–46); trans. Teske, WSA II/1:222.

[4] See *s.* 220, 223B.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 4); 223C (= *s. Guelf.* 6); 223D.1 (= *s. Wilm.* 4); 223E.1 (= *s. Wilm.* 5); 223I.1 (= *s. Wilm.* 15); etc. On Easter as a solemnity and sacrament see Suzanne Poque, "Introduction," *Augustin d'Hippone: Sermons pour la Pâque*, SC 116 (Paris: Cerf, 2003): 13–14.

[5] *ep.* 55.2.3 (CCL 31:235-236); author's translation.

In this chapter we will examine how Augustine led candidates for baptism through this Easter passage, this passing over in Christ from death to life. In the opening section I draw together what is known of the celebration of the Easter Vigil in Hippo, how rite and catechesis intertwined. In the remaining sections I will trace out the contours of Augustine's mystagogy: (i) his Easter morning sermons, delivered to the larger assembly but focused on the newly baptized; (ii) his private catecheses on the Eucharist delivered to the newly baptized in the course of the Easter morning liturgy; (iii) the sermons of Easter week that explored the meaning of resurrection; and (iv) the celebration of the Octave, during which Augustine offered the newly baptized a final solemn exhortation.

LAMPS AND HEARTS ABLAZE: THE RITES OF THE EASTER VIGIL

From the beginning of Holy Week to the end of the Octave the empire went on holiday. Official business came to a halt and all court cases went into recess.[6] People apparently made these weeks a time of leisure. But for those who were to be baptized these days meant a busy round of churchgoing. On Thursday of Holy Week the *competentes* broke their long fast and enjoyed a badly needed cleansing at the public baths. Many others would join them there for this brief relaxing of the Lenten routine.[7] On Friday they celebrated "the passion of the One whose blood blotted out our sins."[8] In Augustine's church the Passion according to Matthew was read.[9] Augustine had once tried to experiment with a modest liturgical innovation: "I wanted the passion to be read according to all the evangelists on successive years. It happened; people didn't

[6] *Codex Theodosianus* 2.8.19, delivered in 389 CE; 2.8.21 and 2.8.24, delivered in 405 CE. For a translation see Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), 44–45. See Augustine's comments on this in *s.* 259.6; cf. *ep.* 34.2.

[7] *ep.* 54.10 (CCL 31:233).

[8] *s.* 218.1 (PL 38:1084); author's translation.

[9] Augustine mentions that the liturgical readings for Holy Week and the Octave of Easter were fixed: *Io. eu. tr.* 6.17; *s.* 232.1. On this see Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 9–143.

hear what they were used to and were upset."[10] In fact, it caused such an uproar that he was forced to restore the traditional Matthean version.

On Holy Saturday everyone fasted.[11] That evening, as it grew dark, Christians all over Hippo would light lamps for the great *lucernarium*, the vigil of the Lord's resurrection. The main basilica was lit by the flicker of flames in numerous oil lamps so that the whole interior shimmered in a golden light.[12] Throughout the long night, all—both "those who have already entered this great household" (the baptized) and those "who are getting close to the faith" (the *competentes*)—would "keep awake on this vigil which is, as it were, the mother of all holy vigils."[13] Throughout the night the landmark events of salvation history were recounted in reading after reading, psalm after psalm: the separation of light from dark at the dawn of creation; the miracle of the burning bush and the revelation of God's hidden name; the crossing of the Red Sea and the victory hymn of Moses; the story of the three young men who preferred Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to apostasy; Isaiah's prophecy of the last days when "'the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be made manifest . . . and all the nations shall be gathered to it' (Is 2:2)."[14] As Augustine saw it, the flow of readings and

[10] *s.* 232.1 (PL 38:1108); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:24.

[11] For a reconstruction of the rites of the Easter Vigil in Hippo see Benedict Busch, "De modo quo sanctus Augustinus descripserit initiationem christianam," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938): 385–483, at 446–65; R. DeLatte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême: Étude liturgico-historique du rituel baptismal des adultes chez saint Augustin," *Questions liturgiques* 56 (1975): 177–223, at 204–23; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 33–39, 75–83; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 778–89; Robin M. Jensen, "Ancient Baptismal Spaces: Form and Function," *Studia Liturgica* 42 (2012): 108–29, at 118–21. None of these studies shows awareness of the role of the Lord's Prayer in the baptismal rite; see the discussion below.

[12] *s.* 221.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 5; MA 1:457). Also 223G.1 (= *s. Wilm.* 7); 223I (= *s. Wilm. add*. [15]); 223K (= *s. Wilm. add*. [17]).

[13] *s.* 219 (PL 38:1088); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:198–99.

[14] *ep. Io. tr.* 1.13 (SC 75:146); trans. Ramsey, WSA III/14:36. There are scattered references to the lectionary readings: Genesis 1 (*s.* 223A.1 [= *s. Denis* 2]);

prayers resembled a great dialogue between God and his people: "Let God speak to us in the readings, let us speak to God in our prayers. If we listen obediently to his words, then the One we pray to is dwelling in us."[15]

Augustine knew that the number and length of readings precluded serious commentary. Not only did his hearers lack the energy to listen to a studied exegesis; he lacked the wherewithal to give one.[16] So he kept his vigil sermons brief. Even so, he wielded his few words with a baroque extravagance. He opened *Sermon* 220 with a rhymed encomium:

Scimus fratres,	We know, brothers and sisters,
et fide firmissima retinemus	and we hold with firmest faith
semel Christum mortuum	that Christ died
esse pro nobis	for us but once:
pro peccatoribus iustum,	the Righteous for sinners,
pro servis dominum,	the Master for slaves,
pro captivis liberum,	the Free for captives,
pro aegrotis medicum,	the Doctor for the sick,
pro miseris beatum,	the Happy for the wretched,
pro egenis opulentem,	the Rich for the needy,
pro perditis quaesitorem,	the Seeker for the lost,
pro venditis redemptorem,	the Redeemer for the sold,
pro grege pastorem,	the Shepherd for the sheep,
et quod est omnibus mirabilius,	and what's the most awe-inspiring of all,
pro creatura creatorem,	the Creator for the created,
servantem tamen quod semper est,	holding on to what He always is,

Exodus 15 (*s.* 223E.2 [= *s. Wilm.* 5]; cf. *s.* 363); Exodus 3 (*s.* 223A.5 [= *s. Denis* 2]); Daniel 2 (*c. litt. Pet.* 2.92.211); Isaiah 2 (*ep. Io. tr.* 1.13). For possible psalms and Pauline readings see Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 73–77.

[15] *s.* 219 (PL 38:1088); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:199.

[16] *s.* 223A.1 (= *s. Denis* 2; MA 1:11). While the authenticity of this sermon is contested, the sentiment expressed here is not. Note the brevity of Augustine's vigil sermons: *s.* 219-222; 223D-223K (= *s. Wilm.* 4-7, *Wilm. add.* [14-17]).

tradentem quod factus est;	handing over what He was made;
deum latentem,	hidden from sight, the Godhead,
hominem apparentem;	appearing to sight, the human,
virtute vivificantem,	by his power, life-giving,
infirmitate morientem,	by his weakness, dying,
divinitate immutabilem,	in his divinity, unchanging,
carne passibilem.	in his flesh, capable of suffering.[17]

For Augustine and his hearers the Vigil celebrated the cosmic victory of Christ over death, over sin, over the demonic powers. The creation story from Genesis—particularly its description of God separating light from dark—would link in Augustine's mind with the blaze of lamps that lit both basilica and town: "The sun has gone down, but the day has not gone away, for a bright-lit earth has followed on a bright-lit sky."[18] For Augustine this keeping night watch and lighting lamps united flesh to heart, physical act to interior affection: "Keep the night watch humbly; pray humbly—with a devoted faith, a solid hope, a bright-burning charity—pondering what kind of day our [bright] splendor will result in if our humility can turn night into day. Therefore, may God—who ordered the light to blaze out of the dark—make our hearts blaze bright: that we may do on the inside something akin to what we have done with the lamps kindled within this house of prayer. Let us furnish the true dwelling place of God—our consciences—with lamps of justice."[19]

As Augustine saw it, the Vigil symbolized the preeminent gathering of time past and time future into time present so that it became, in T. S. Eliot's famous phrase, a "still point in the turning world." On the one hand the Vigil was a "solemnity" that, by "celebrating past events . . . does not permit them to pass away."[20] So candidates and faithful would follow Christ's exhortation—to

[17] *s.* 220 (PL 38:1089); author's translation, *AOW*, 132. Similar rhymed figures appear in *s.* 221 (= *s. Guelf.* 5), 222.

[18] *s.* 221.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 5; MA 1:457); author's translation.

[19] *s.* 223I (= *s. Wilm. add*. 15; MA 1:717); author's translation.

[20] *s.* 220 (PL 38:1089); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:200.

keep night watch and pray—in a way the apostles had not.[21] On the other hand, this vigil offered a foretaste of end-time: a day uninterrupted by night, an open-eyed resting within God uninterrupted by the daily death of sleep.[22] Past and future met in the sacramental present of the baptismal candidates who would soon fulfill the great Pauline phrases: "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light"; "arise, you who sleep, and Christ will illuminate you"; "you are all children of light and children of the day."[23]

At some point—either during the all-night vigil itself or perhaps earlier in the day—two events took place that only the baptized and the candidates could have witnessed.[24] The first was the solemn handing back of the creed (*redditio symboli*). The candidates would stand on a raised platform and recite before the assembled faithful the symbol they had memorized.[25] Adults were not the only ones who had to endure this moment in the spotlight. Anyone aged seven or older would be required to do so since, as Augustine noted, children by that age were "able both to lie and speak the truth, both to confess and deny the faith."[26]

The second event was a final solemn catechesis. Augustine would address the candidates and explain the meaning of the

[21] Augustine quotes Matt 26:41 in *s.* 222, 223B.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 4), 223C (= *s. Guelf.* 6); 223E.1 (= *s. Wilm.* 5); 223K (= *s. Wilm. add.* [17]).

[22] *s.* 221.3 (= *s. Guelf.* 5); *s.* 223B.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 4); 223D.2 (= *s. Wilm.* 4); 223G (= *s. Wilm.* 7); 223J (= *s. Wilm. add.* 16).

[23] Eph 5:14 in *s.* 223J (= *s. Wilm. add.* 16); Eph 5:8 in *s.* 219 and 222; 1 Thess 5:5 in *s.* 223K (= *s. Wilm. add.* 17).

[24] Frederik van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 363, and DeLatte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême," 205–6, presume that both rites occurred earlier in the day. Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 78–82, sees the solemn *redditio* and the catechesis on baptism as events held within the night-long vigil; this would imply that there was a dismissal of the catechumens. Poque also believes that before the dismissal the resurrection narrative from Matthew was read and a sermon was given on it.

[25] *s.* 59.1 (CCL 41Aa:221); cf. *conf.* 8.2.5 (the story of Victorinus in Rome).

[26] *an. et or.* 1.10.12 (CSEL 60:312); trans. Teske, WSA I/23:479. See also *an. et or.* 3.9.12.

sacrament of the font.[27] Once, in a sermon directed to neophytes, he alluded to the content and time of delivery of this final catechesis on baptism:

> Now when you were baptized, or rather just before you were baptized, I spoke to you on Saturday about the sacrament of the font in which you were to be plunged. And I told you, what I don't think you have forgotten, that baptism had, or has, the same value as being buried with Christ, as the apostle says: "For we have been buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that just as he has risen from the dead, so we too may walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).[28]

The remarks here indicate that he stressed, as Paul had, that the rite signaled a dying with Christ. These passing remarks are tantalizing, for while they indicate that Augustine did give a sermon to the *competentes* just before their baptism, unfortunately none of them has been preserved among his extant sermons.[29] His brief

[27] *s.* 228.3 (PL 38:1102).

[28] *s.* 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:462); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:269. This Pauline theme held pride of place in fourth-century baptismal catechesis; see Thomas M. Finn, "Baptismal Death and Resurrection. A Study in Fourth Century Eastern Baptismal Theology," *Worship* 43 (1969): 175–89.

[29] Th.-André Audet, "Note sur les catéchèses baptismales de S. Augustin," *Augustinus Magister*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954–55), 1:151–60, examined possible examples among Augustine's extant sermons and concluded that "les catéchèses augustiniennes sur le baptême sont irrémédiablement perdues." He does venture one slight possibility: *s. Denis* 8. Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 81–82, denies that this can be one. While it does give valuable indications of what such a catechesis would have been, it is clearly a sermon given to the neophytes on the octave and not to *competentes* during the Vigil. For her part, Poque has suggested that *s.* 363 might be one. This sermon is on Exod 15:1-21, one of the readings used during the Vigil; it touches on several of Augustine's favorite baptismal themes; it quotes another of the Vigil readings (Dan 2:6) and makes a brief allusion to Romans 6. But there are also indications against such a claim. The Maurists questioned whether this is indeed an authentic sermon of Augustine; there is no turning to the *competentes* such as one typically finds in his catecheses nor is there any exegesis of Romans 6 or any allusion to the rite. Thus it seems more likely that

remarks here at least indicate something of his curricular timetable: that he, unlike Cyril and Ambrose, did not wait until Easter week to explain the rite of baptism but rather, like the Antiochenes Theodore and John Chrysostom, did so prior to its actual celebration.

Sometime in the early morning dark the candidates, together with Augustine and an entourage of ministers, would process out of the basilica to the strains of Psalm 41:

> As a deer longs for streams of water
> so does my soul long for you, O God.
> My soul has been athirst for the living God.
> When shall I reach him and appear before the face of God?
> For I will walk into the place of the wonderful tent,
> even to the home of God,
> by the voice of exultation and praise,
> the sounds of one celebrating a festival.

Once, in an *Exposition of Ps 41*, Augustine noted that "we could well hear the voice of our catechumens here . . . for they are hurrying toward the holy, grace-giving bath," and that it is sung "to arouse in them a longing for the fountain of forgiveness of their sins, like a deer for the springs of water." But as Augustine added, "I cannot believe that a longing of such intensity is satisfied in believers even at baptism." Only the vision of God, drunk in the deep draughts of end-time, could still such profound longing.[30]

The baptismal party would process to an annex just off the main basilica.[31] (For an outline of the rites in Hippo Regius, comparing them with those reported by Tertullian, Cyril, and Ambrose, see chart 13.) This annex included three rooms: the baptistery itself,

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this sermon, if it is indeed the work of Augustine, was simply one Augustine gave in the course of the Easter Vigil. Thus DeLatte, "Saint Augustin et le baptême," 206, concludes: "Cependant, aucun de ses sermons n'a été conservé."

[30] *en. Ps.* 41.1 (CCL 38:460); trans. Boulding, WSA III/16:239.

[31] Erwan Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone: Ville épiscopale de saint Augustin* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1958), 110–12.

an antechamber on its southwest side, and a small chapel with an apse on its northwest side. Erwan Marec, who directed the archaeological excavations at Hippo, referred to the antechamber as a *catechumeneum*, presuming that either catecheses or prebaptismal rites took place there. Its floor was decorated with an intricate mosaic tableau: cruciform medallions inlaid with tesserae of chestnut, ebony, ruby red, and yellow, each medallion knit to others by a green-and-bronze garlanded latticework. Marec has called the small chapel with the apse a *consignatorium*, presuming that postbaptismal rites took place there. It, too, had a mosaic floor: eight-petaled violet- and rose-colored tulips alternating with oval-branched crosses on a blue-black backdrop, the whole held within a braided border. The baptistery itself was irregularly shaped: squared off on two sides and semicircular on the others. At its center was the font. It bore a close resemblance to the heated baths found in the houses of the wealthy. Some North African fonts were octagonal, like the one in Timgad; others, like the well-preserved one in Cuicul and like Augustine's in Hippo, were rectangular and had pillars at each of the four corners.[32] A marble baldachin would have arched high over the font, while curtains perhaps hung between its pillars. The font itself was one meter deep, two-and-a-half meters long, and two meters wide, and may have had steps leading down into it. A jet of water may have streamed into the font, causing the water's surface to swirl and eddy. As van der Meer points out: "Living, that is to say, moving water was essential. Standing water, a natural seat of corruption, could never have been the symbol of new life which was not subject to corruption, nor could it ever have represented the soul's new potentiality for life."[33]

At some point—either soon after arriving at the baptistery or perhaps during the earlier *redditio*—the candidates once more renounced Satan and swore their allegiance to Christ. In so doing they would have turned west when renouncing Satan and then east

[32] Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 210–30, discusses a range of North African baptisteries, which helps put the one in Augustine's basilica in clearer context.

[33] Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 365.

when swearing allegiance to Christ, much as candidates did in Jerusalem. Once, in a sermon on Psalm 102, Augustine alluded to this bodily turning, speaking of it obliquely enough to respect the *disciplina arcani*: " 'Look how wide the east is from the west, so far has [God] set our sins from us.' Those who know the sacraments know this. Nevertheless, I only say what all may hear. When sin is remitted, your sins fall, your grace rises. Your sins are, as it were, on the decline, your grace which frees you, on the rise. . . . You should look to the rising and turn away from the setting."[34] Also at some point—whether before the candidates' arrival or perhaps in their presence—the water was sanctified.[35] It was signed with the sign of the cross, and the name of Christ was invoked over it.[36] This consecratory prayer was apparently improvised, for Augustine reports that some clergy, "inexpert as persons of prayer . . . pour forth error-filled words" in prayers "contrary to the Catholic faith."[37]

As the time for their cleansing neared, the candidates would strip off their clothes and make their way to the font. Such nakedness did not necessarily provoke embarrassment. As Peter Brown notes, there was in the great public baths and public games an easygoing nudity; for them "nudity and sexual shame were questions of social status: the way people felt about being naked, or seeing others naked, depended to a large extent on their social situation. Thus, at the top of society, nudity in the public baths expressed the utter ease of the well-to-do, moving without a trace of sexual shame in front of their inferiors."[38] However, we know that in Augustine's church, during the baptismal rite, men were carefully separated from women.[39] In some rites candidates were anointed prior to baptism. It is not clear that that occurred in North

[34] *en. Ps.* 102.19 (CSEL 95.1:100); author's translation. Liturgical scholars do not seem aware of this crucial text. See also *en. Ps.* 76.4; *ep.* 97.9.

[35] *bapt.* 5.20.27-28 (CSEL 51:285). Cf. Cyprian, *ep.* 70.1.

[36] *Io. eu. tr.* 118.5 (CCL 36:657); *Sermo* 352.3 (PL 39:1551). See also *bapt.* 3.10.15.

[37] *bapt.* 6.25.47 (CSEL 51:323); author's translation.

[38] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 315.

[39] *ciu. dei* 22.8 (CCL 48:818).

Africa, though Augustine, in one sermon, refers to an anointing in language reminiscent of that used to describe prebaptismal anointing: just as Christ had gone to the Mount of Olives before his death, so Christians went to the "mount of ointment"; by this Christ "has made us wrestlers against the devil."[40]

Candidates then entered the font, probably one by one. Augustine once compared the font to the pool of Bethsaida (John 5) and asked: "But why was this [pool] so made that you had to step down into it? Because the Lord's passion demands the humble person. You must step down humbly, you mustn't be proud, if you want to be healed."[41] There, each candidate would stand waist-deep in the water. The celebrant then broke down the creed into the three questions: "Do you believe in God the Father almighty . . . ? Do you believe in his son Jesus Christ our Lord . . . ? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit . . . ?" After each question the candidate answered "*credo*" ("I believe")[42] and was then immersed (or as Augustine would put it, "soaked").[43] This means that in Augustine's church, as in Cyril's and in Ambrose's, interrogations alternated with immersions.[44] It is not precisely clear how immersions were done. A minister (a deacon?) perhaps held the person under the jet of water that rushed into the font or perhaps dunked the person's head and shoulders beneath the waters of the waist-deep pool.

As soon as they emerged, there was an anointing with chrism, that is, with scented oil. The chrism had been consecrated by the sign of the cross.[45] According to conciliar decree chrismation was

[40] *Io. eu. tr.* 33.3 (CCL 36:307); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:525.

[41] *s.* 125.6 (PL 38:693); trans. Hill, WSA III/4:257–58. See also *s.* 258.2.

[42] *c. litt. Pet.* 3.8.9 (CSEL 52:171). The interrogation formulas are cited in discussions of infant baptism: *ep.* 98.7; *s.* 294.12. See Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 35.

[43] Augustine sometimes uses the word "*tinguere*" ("to wet" or "to soak"), perhaps playing on the word's other connotations, that is, "to dye" or "to imbue": *s.* 213.8, 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7); *Io. eu. tr.* 15.3; 80.3. At other times he uses "*conspergere*" ("to moisten by sprinkling"): *s.* 227, 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6), 272.

[44] *c. litt. Pet.* 3.8.9 (CSEL 52:171). See also *ep.* 98.7, *s.* 294.12. See Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 35. On Ambrose's rite see above, chap. 2.

[45] *Io. eu. tr.* 118.5 (CCL 36:657).

the bishop's prerogative, and according to Augustine the oil was applied to the candidate's head.[46] As he understood it, this "sacrament of chrismation . . . is holy and belongs to that set of visible signs, as does baptism itself."[47] Like Tertullian, Augustine thought of it in christic terms: the newly baptized, like Christ the king, would be given "the strength to rule their flesh like kings and to vanquish the world in him who shed his blood for them."[48] Also like Tertullian he emphasized its sacerdotal implications: "Just as we call all Christians 'christs' by virtue of their mystical anointing, so we call all Christians 'priests' because they are all members of the one Priest."[49] The "sevenfold Spirit" was invoked over the newly baptized and hands were laid on them.[50] I should add that Augustine did not distinguish between baptism and confirmation (or "chrismation" as he called it) the way medieval theologians would later do. Instead, he described each element—whether actions (exorcism, signing with the cross, bathing, anointing, hand laying), objects (the font, oil), even time periods (Easter, the Octave)—as distinct "sacraments" in his sense of the term: as "visible words," as "sacred symbols" of "the invisible."[51]

The neophytes then donned new robes made, in all probability, of white linen.[52] These linen robes were an ancient symbol of ritual purity and would have contrasted with the goatskin sackcloth the

[46] *c. litt. Pet.* 2.104.237 (CSEL 52:151); 3d Council of Carthage, *Canon* 36 (CCL 149:335).

[47] *c. litt. Pet.* 2.104.239 (CSEL 52:151); author's translation.

[48] *ciu. dei* 17.4 (CCL 48:561); trans. Babcock, WSA I/7:230.

[49] *ciu. dei* 20.10 (CCL 48:657); trans. Babcock, WSA I/7:409.

[50] *s.* 229M.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 15; MA 1:490). See also *ep. Io. tr.* 6.10; *s.* 248.5; 249.3.

[51] *Io. eu. tr.* 80.3 (CCL 36:529); *ciu. dei* 10.5 (CCL 47:277). See also *s.* 324; *ep.* 54.1 and 138.7. These passages, of course, touch on only one strain in Augustine's multifaceted sacramental theory. On this, see Charles Couturier, "*Sacramentum* et *mysterium* dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin," 161–74 in *Études Augustiniennes*, ed. Henri Rondet (Paris: Aubier, 1953); Basil Studer, "*Sacramentum* et *Exemplum* chez saint Augustin," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975): 87–141; Marie-François Berrouard, "Le *Tractatus 80, 3 in Iohannis Euangelium* de saint Augustin: La parole, le sacrement et la foi," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 33 (1987): 235–54; Emmanuel J. Cutrone, "Sacraments," *ATA*, 741–47.

[52] *s.* 120.3 (PL 38:678). See also *s.* 223, 260C.7 (=*c. Mai* 94).

newly baptized had, as *competentes*, trodden underfoot. For the next eight days they would wear their baptismal robes to signal their commitment to a stainless life. They may also have kept their heads covered with a veil.[53] In North Africa they also wore sandals lest their feet touch the earth. Augustine once remarked—caustically—that people were unusually superstitious about this tradition of not touching the earth during Easter Week but, at the same time, were quite lackadaisical about more serious matters, such as drinking themselves "dead-drunk."[54]

At some point after emerging from the font the newly baptized raised their hands in the *orans* position and prayed the Lord's Prayer.[55] It is not clear whether they did this while still naked and dripping from the waters of the font or whether they had already been anointed with chrism and received their white baptismal robes. The very idea of praying the Lord's Prayer at this point may seem surprising. We associate the Lord's Prayer with Eucharist, not baptism. However, scholars have long been aware that in certain Eastern rites baptismal candidates prayed the Lord's Prayer just as they emerged from the font. It is mentioned in the West Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions*: that immediately after the postbaptismal chrismation "those who have been baptized are to stand and say the prayer taught us by the Lord. . . . Let these pray facing east."[56] It is also mentioned by Augustine's contemporary, John Chrysostom, during his tenure in Constantinople, who likewise insists the newly baptized "immediately pronounces these words: 'Our

[53] *s.* 376A.1 (PL 39:1669).

[54] *ep.* 55.19.35 (CCL 31:263); author's translation.

[55] For a discussion of this see William Harmless, "'. . . receive today how you are to call upon God' (*s.* 58.1): The Lord's Prayer and Augustine's Mystagogy," in *Seeing Through the Eyes of Faith: The Mystagogy of the Church Fathers*, ed. Paul van Geest (Louvain: Peeters, 2014).

[56] *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.45.1-2 (SC 336:106); trans. WEC 2:244. For a discussion see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 564–73; Juliette Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem: Fourth- and Fifth-Century Evidence from Palestine, Syria, and Egypt* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 120–30.

Father who art in heaven.' "[57] There are hints in Cyprian of Carthage's *On the Lord's Prayer*.[58]

Indications that this was the North African practice come from a recently discovered letter of Augustine (*ep.* 5*) in which he responds to several questions from a North African bishop named Valentinianus. Valentinianus had asked Augustine: "Why do those who have just been baptized immediately (*continuo*) in the customary [Lord's] prayer confess their sins which they wish to be forgiven when, in the baptism itself, everything has just been forgiven?"[59] What was causing Valentinianus anxiety was ritual incongruence. No sooner had candidates been washed of their sins in the potent waters of baptism than they were "immediately" required to pray the Lord's Prayer whose words strongly implied that the one praying was a sinner in need of forgiveness ("Forgive us our trespasses . . ."). The newly baptized would, of course, later witness the Lord's Prayer as part of the eucharistic rite. Well, then, how immediate was "immediately"? Given both Valentinianus's anxiety and Augustine's speculations in the letter, it was in all probability right after candidates emerged from the font. This practice of praying the Lord's Prayer *within* the baptismal rite does much to explain the unique North African rites of the *traditio* and

[57] John Chrysostom, *In Col.* 6 (PG 62:342D). For a discussion see Thomas M. Finn, *The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal Instructions of St. John Chrysostom*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 15 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 184–88. A later reference to the Lord's Prayer within the baptismal rite in Constantinople is found in a sermon by Chrysostom's successor, Proclus (bp. 434–446); see J. H. Barkhuizen, "Proclus of Constantinople, Homily 27," *Acta patristica et Byzantina* 14 (2003): 1–20; Victor Saxer, *Les rites de l'initiation chrétienne du II^e au VI^e siècle: Esquisse historique et signification d'après leur principaux témoins* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1988), 333–40; Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 748–52.

[58] Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen: On the Lord's Prayer* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 22, cites Cyprian of Carthage, *De dominica oratione* 9 (CCL 3A:94) as an indication that in the baptismal rite of Carthage in Cyprian's time the Lord's Prayer was prayed as soon as candidates emerged from the font.

[59] *ep.* 5*.1 (BA 46B:118–20); trans. Robert Eno, *Saint Augustine: Letters VI (1*-29*)*, FOTC 81:46. See also Teske, *Letters 211-270, 1*-29**, WSA II/4:248.

redditio orationis (as well as the catecheses that accompanied them), rites unknown in Jerusalem and Milan. Just as candidates had been required to memorize the creed so that they could fully assent to the three questions on the Father, Son, and Spirit asked them as they stood naked in the baptismal font, so too they were required to memorize the Lord's Prayer so that they could step forth from the font and, as their first act in their new status as adopted sons and daughters of God, pray to God as Father in the words that Jesus taught.

Those emerging from the font were thought to possess miraculous powers of healing and intercession. In *City of God*, Augustine tells the story of Innocentia, a woman of high standing in the community who had been diagnosed with breast cancer: "As Easter approached, she was directed in a dream to stand watch at the women's part of the baptistery and to have the first newly baptized woman she met make the sign of Christ over the site of her cancer."[60] She obeyed the instructions of the dream and found, to her great joy, that the cancerous lump in her breast had vanished. When she reported the cure to her doctor he was nonplussed: "I thought you were going to tell me something great!" She was shocked. He then added: "What's so great about Christ healing a cancer when he once raised a man four days dead?"[61]

After these rites the baptismal party would return to the main basilica and there be greeted by the faithful. The neophytes, or as Augustine called them, "*infantes*," had crossed the Red Sea of baptism. Their first Eucharist followed immediately. As he once put it: "So to what does Christ lead those who believe and have been baptized? To the manna."[62] During this first Eucharist the neophytes simply listened and watched—apparently in baffled silence—for they had received no prior catechesis concerning it.[63] For the next week they would witness the Eucharist at close range,

[60] *ciu. dei* 22.8 (CCL 48:818); trans. Babcock, WSA I/7:509.

[61] *ciu. dei* 22.8 (CCL 48:819); trans. Babcock, WSA I/7:509.

[62] *Io. eu. tr.* 11.4 (CCL 36:112); author's translation.

[63] *s.* 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30–31). The lack of preparation is also mentioned explicitly in *s.* 272 and is implied in *s.* 227 and 229A.1 (= *Guelf.* 7).

standing within the *cancelli*, a sanctuary area that was sectioned off by a railing and within which the bishop, presbyters, and deacons normally stood.[64] This night they would hear for the first time the dialogue that opened the eucharistic prayer:

> "The Lord be with you."
> "And with your spirit."
> "Lift up your hearts."
> "We have (lifted them up) to the Lord."
> "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God."
> "It is right and just."[65]

The "sanctification" (*sanctificatio*)—as Augustine called the consecration of the bread and wine—would follow.[66] At the end of the eucharistic prayer all would voice their approval with an "Amen."[67] The Lord's Prayer would be recited, and at the words "forgive us our trespasses," all would strike their breasts.[68] After this Augustine would proclaim, "Peace be with you," and all would offer one another the kiss of peace.[69] Finally, the neophytes

[64] *s.* 260C.7 (= *s. Mai* 94; MA 1:338) refers to the neophytes leaving the *cancelli* at the Octave. Cf. *ep.* 34.2, in which Augustine refers to a Donatist neophyte standing within the *cancelli*.

[65] *s.* 229A.3 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:463–64), 227 (PL 38:1100); author's translation. Cf. *s.* 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6).

[66] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101); author's translation. See also *s.* 229A. Cyprian used the same term: *ep.* 63.13 ("*in sanctificando calice*"); Ambrose employed the word "*consecratio*": *sacr.* 4.14 and 16; *mys.* 54.

[67] *s.* 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:31).

[68] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101). See also *s.* 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6). On beating of the breast at the Lord's Prayer see *s.* 351.6. It is not clear that in North Africa the congregation themselves actually recited the Lord's Prayer in the Eucharist; instead, they may simply have *heard* the presider do so. In *s.* 58.12 (CCL 41Aa:212) Augustine says: "*In ecclesia enim ad altare Dei cotidie dicitur ista dominica oratio, et audiunt illam fideles*." The idea that the faithful "heard" the prayer rather than recited it is the interpretation of Kenneth W. Stevenson, *The Lord's Prayer: A Text in Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 83.

[69] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101).

would come up to Augustine. They would hear the words "Body of Christ" spoken to them and would receive the consecrated bread in their hands. A deacon would then offer them the cup.[70] The neophytes experienced all this—seeing, hearing, partaking in "what took place on the altar"—without comment or catechesis. Augustine's silence had been deliberate. He would not take up the deeper implications of Eucharist—"what it is, what it means, and the great mystery it holds"—until the next morning.[71]

THE GREAT SWAP: EASTER MORNING

On Easter morning the neophytes would return to the basilica for a second Eucharist. During the liturgy of the word the opening of Acts and that of John's gospel were read, and between the two readings all would sing Psalm 117 and the great Alleluia.[72] A sermon addressed to the whole assembly followed. Augustine kept his remarks brief, for it had been a long night and both he and the neophytes felt weary after the previous night's labors.[73] Once, in fact, he had to beg off after only a few words, admitting that he was suffering acute exhaustion.[74]

In these public sermons Augustine would direct the assembly's attention to the white-robed neophytes who stood in a special section of the church. (For a complete listing of sermons mentioning neophytes, see chart 14.) He would exclaim that if the assembly wanted to see the Scriptures enfleshed it need only gaze at the

[70] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1248). On the bishop giving the bread see *ep.* 151.9; *c. litt. Pet.* 2.23.53; on communion in the hand see *c. litt. Pet.* 2.23.53; on the deacon offering the cup see *s.* 304.1. Van der Meer and DeLatte claim that the neophytes were also offered a cup of milk and honey; Poque finds no evidence of this in Augustine's works, nor have I.

[71] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1246); author's translation.

[72] Augustine cites lectionary readings as follows: Acts 1 (*s.* 227); Psalm 117 (*s.* 120.3, 226, 229B [= *s. Guelf.* 8], 230, 260D.1 [= *s. Guelf.* 18]); Alleluia (e.g., *s.* 228, 229B.2 [= *s. Guelf.* 8]; *ep.* 55.32); John 1 (*s.* 119-121 and 225-226). On the lectionary of Easter see Cyrille Lambot, "Les sermons de saint Augustin pour les fêtes de Pâques," *Revue Bénédictine* 79 (1969): 148–72, at 163–64.

[73] *s.* 228.1 (PL 38:1101).

[74] *s.* 320 (PL 38:1442).

neophytes: that on the night before, as at the dawn of creation, the Spirit had moved over the waters and God had said, "Let there be light," such that the neophytes themselves had become the first day of a new creation (Gen 1:2-5);[75] that they who "were once darkness" were now "light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8);[76] that "it is about [them] we sing, 'This is the day which the Lord has made: let us be glad and rejoice' " (Ps 117:24).[77]

Augustine regarded the neophytes as living reminders that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." As he saw it, Christ, like an import merchant from a foreign land, offered us a "great swap": he took on our flesh and we received his spirit.[78] He thus became a mediator, quite literally, a "middleman," neither departing from God nor departing from us.[79] In this swap the Son of God became Son of Man that we might become children of God. And for Augustine no one embodied this more concretely than the newly baptized who stood out so prominently in the assembly.

Augustine would publicly announce that the newly baptized now enjoyed a new title and a new status: "These people—who a little while ago were called '*competentes*'—are now called

[75] *s.* 226 (PL 38:1099).

[76] *s.* 225.4 (PL 38:1098). See also *s.* 226.

[77] *s.* 225.4 (PL 38:1098). See also *s.* 226.

[78] *s.* 121.5 (PL 38:680). This *Christus mercator* image appears in other Easter week sermons: *s.* 229H.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 12); 233.3. On this theme see Suzanne Poque, "Christus mercator. Notes augustiniennes," *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 48 (1960): 564–77; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 16–17.

[79] *s.* 121.5 (PL 38:680). This figures in the Easter week sermons as well: see *s.* 240.4; 245.4. The theme of Christ as "mediator" is central to Augustine's Christology and eucharistic theology. It forms the central emphasis (and polemic) of the recently discovered Dolbeau sermon: *s.* 198.38-49 (= *Dolbeau* 26); cf. *s.* 47.12. It is also a dominant theme in books 9 and 10 of *ciu. dei*. On the larger outlines of this theme see Brian E. Daley, "A Humble Mediator: Distinctive Elements in St. Augustine's Christology," *Word and Spirit* 9 (1987): 100–17, at 105–8; Robert Dodaro, "*Christus sacerdos*," 377–93 in Goulven Madec, ed., *Augustin Prédicateur (395-411): Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (5-7 Sept, 1996)*, CEASA 159 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1998); Daniel J. Jones, *Christus Sacerdos in the Preaching of St. Augustine: Christ and Christian Identity*, Patrologia 14 (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

'newborns' (*infantes*). They were called '*competentes*' because they were thumping in their mother's womb, begging to be born; now they are called 'newborns' because they—who had first been born to the world—are now born to Christ."[80] He would sometimes lavish other titles on them: they were the "white-robed enlightened ones," the "new sprouts of mother church," and most important, they were "faithful ones."[81] Augustine knew that new titles were not enough. He wanted people whose "lives move in harmony with their name": "I hear the name; let me see the real thing."[82] So he would beg the neophytes to focus on Christ "who called you, who loved you, who went looking for you when you were lost, who enlightened you when you were found."[83] Augustine also knew celebrations would follow the liturgy and so warned the neophytes not to get drunk—on liquor at least. The only drunkenness permitted them was the intoxication that came from the Spirit and from psalm singing.[84]

Once, in closing, Augustine pointed to what he saw as three catechetical highpoints: (1) the "sacrament of the symbol," (2) the "sacrament of the Lord's Prayer," and (3) the "sacrament of the font."[85] He reminded the neophytes that he had spoken on the occasion of these great "traditions" (literally, "hand-ons"). These were traditions in the ancient rabbinic sense of it: formulae memorized, revered, and passed on from one generation to another. Paul had used the very same terminology when speaking to the Corinthians—"I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received"—and had gone on to recite three ancient formulae: the story of the Lord's Supper, a creedal fragment about the death and resurrection of Christ, and the list of the witnesses to the

[80] *s.* 228.1 (PL 38:1101); author's translation.

[81] *s.* 120.3 (PL 38:678); 228.2 (PL 38:1102); author's translation.

[82] *s.* 228.2 (PL 38:1102); author's translation.

[83] *s.* 228.2 (PL 38:1102); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:258.

[84] *s.* 225.4 (PL 38:1098); also *s.* 228. In *s.* 230 and 229B.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 8) he addresses this admonition to everyone.

[85] *s.* 228.3 (PL 38:1102); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:258.

resurrection (1 Cor 11:23-26 and 15:3-7).[86] For Augustine's neophytes one "tradition" remained: the "sacrament of the altar," something they had witnessed but about which they had heard nothing. So, after the dismissal of the catechumens, Augustine would hand on to the neophytes this one final mystery. It was, as he saw it, a debt he owed them.[87]

BE WHAT YOU SEE, RECEIVE WHAT YOU ARE: THE EUCHARIST

The last of the catechumens would trickle out. The doors of the basilica would be closed, and the neophytes would find themselves once more permitted to stay on and enjoy their new privileges as full-fledged members of the Body of Christ. "The prayer"—probably the prayers of the faithful—would follow.[88] Then, it seems, Augustine and his entourage would leave the apse and make their way to the sanctuary area, located within the central nave and surrounded by wooden railings (*cancelli*). At its center was a wooden table that served as the altar.[89] The neophytes would take their places quite close to it. It was here, apparently, that Augustine delivered a brief catechesis on the Eucharist.[90]

[86] See Raymond Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 425–35, 534; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 408–9, 425–53; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. 194–241.

[87] *s.* 228.3 (PL 38:1102). See also *s.* 226.

[88] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1100). For reconstructions of the eucharistic liturgy in Hippo see van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop*, 398–99; Robin Jensen and J. Patout Burns, "The Eucharistic Liturgy in Hippo's Basilica Major at the Time of Augustine," 335–38 in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

[89] Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone*, 28–29.

[90] On Augustine's eucharistic theology see J. Patout Burns, "The Eucharist as the Foundation of Christian Unity in North African Theology," *Augustinian Studies* 32 (2001): 1–24. Other essentials include Athanase Sage, "L'Eucharistie dans la pensée de saint Augustin," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 15 (1969): 209–40; Joanne McWilliam, "Weaving the Strands Together: A Decade in Augustine's Eucharistic Theology," *Augustiniana* 41 (1991) 497–506; Allan D.

Four of these have been preserved: *Sermons* 227, 229, 229A, and 272.[91] (The authenticity of one other, *Sermon* 228B, has been challenged).[92] Of these, two (229, 229A) were given prior to the eucharistic prayer and two (221, 272) just before communion.[93]

Augustine would first point to what lay on the altar, that is, bread and a cup of wine: "The food you see here on the Lord's table you are used to seeing on your own tables at home—as far as outer appearances go. It has the same look (*visus*) but not the

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Fitzgerald, "Augustine on Eucharist: 'Your only son [is] my ransom price, which I eat, drink and dispense to others' (*Conf*. X, 43, 70)," 267–80 in *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 4: *The Spiritual Life*, ed. Wendy Mayer, Pauline Allen and Lawrence Cross (Strathfield, Australia: St. Pauls Publications, 2006); John C. Cavadini, "Eucharistic Exegesis in Augustine's *Confessions*," *Augustinian Studies* 41 (2011): 87–108.

[91] The authenticity of three of these has not been contested: *s.* 227, 272, and 229A (= *Guelf.* 7). *s.* 229 appears to be a fragment of *s. Denis* 6. Karl Adam regarded *s. Denis* 6 as spurious but viewed the fragment preserved in the Maurist version of *s.* 229 as genuine; Adam's challenge centered on the description of the consecration. Benedict Busch personally questioned Gabriel Morin on this, and Morin affirmed that *s. Denis* 6 was authentic, though he acknowledged that it may have been interpolated at this point. See Busch, "De modo quo s. Augustinus descripserit initiationem christianam," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 52 (1938): 385–483, at 397n46. As a result some scholars (van der Meer, Audet, Albaric) continue to list this as "contested" without citing the reason it was contested. However, its authenticity has been accepted by text critics such as Cyrille Lambot, "Les sermons de saint Augustin pour les fêtes de Paques," 148–72; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 38–39, 83–84; and Anne-Marie LaBonnardière, "Les commentaires simultanés de Matth. 6, 12 et de I Jo. 1, 8, dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 1 (1955): 129–47. I focus on the section of the sermon whose authenticity is not in dispute, namely, the Maurist version of *s.* 229.

[92] *s.* 228B (= *s. Denis* 3) is rejected by Adam and others; listed as "doubtful" by van der Meer, Mandouze, and Audet; affirmed by Wilmart, Morin, and Mohrmann; and accepted by Poque, Berrouard, and Lambot. See Pierre-Patrick Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, Instrumenta Patristica XII (Steenbrugis: In abbatia S. Petri, 1976), 160. While it may well be genuine, it is markedly different in tone and theology. I will not treat it here.

[93] Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 83-84.

same power (*virtus*)."[94] He would then announce the mystery: once "the sanctification is added, this bread will be the body of Christ, and this wine will be the blood of Christ."[95] To explain the transformation of elements he would point to the neophytes' own experience of transformation through baptism: "You are the same people you were before. Nor do you present new faces before us. Yet you are brand new, your old selves on the outside, new by the grace of holiness, something, as it were, utterly new."[96] What "sanctified" the bread and wine, according to Augustine, was the "word of God," just as it had sanctified the baptismal waters the night before.[97] In asserting this Augustine touched on one strain of his multifaceted theology of sacrament. In his view, words—or more precisely, God's word—made things sacraments. In his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* he asks what defines Christ's baptism and then answers: "The bath of water with a word. Take away water, there is no baptism; take away the word, there is no baptism."[98] In a later *Tractate* he added: "Take away the word, and what is the water except water? The word is added to the elemental substance,

[94] *s.* 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:462); author's translation. Cf. *s.* 227, 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6), 272.

[95] *s.* 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:462); author's translation. Cf. *s.* 229.3. Since *s.* 227 and 272 took place after the eucharistic prayer, Augustine spoke of the bread and wine as already being the body and blood of Christ. For Augustine's views on the real presence see especially Marie-François Berrouard, "L'être sacramentel de l'eucharistie selon saint Augustin: Commentaire de Jean VI. 60-63 dans le *Tractatus* XXVII, 1-6 et 11-12 in *in Iohannis Evangelium*," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 99 (1977): 703–21.

[96] *Sermo* 229A.1 (= *s.* Guelf. 7; MA 1:462); author's translation.

[97] *Sermo* 227 (PL 38:1099); author's translation. For a commentary on this sermon see Michel Albaric, "A Eucharistic Catechesis," 269–81 in *Augustine and the Bible*, ed. Pamela Bright (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1999); also Hubertus R. Drobner, "Augustinus, *Sermo* 227: Eine österliche Eucharistiekatechese für die Neugetauften," in *Collectanea Augustiana: Mélanges T. J. Van Bavel*, ed. Bernard Bruning et al., 2 vols. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 2:483–95. See also *s.* 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7), 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6).

[98] *Io. eu. tr.* 15.4 (CCL 36:152); trans. Hill, WSA III/12:277.

and it becomes a sacrament, also itself, as it were, a visible word."[99] Augustine believed that God's word imbued the material element, whether the waters of baptism or the bread and wine, with a life-giving power. The true dynamic of the sacraments was hidden from sight: "These things are called sacraments, brothers and sisters, because in them one thing is seen, something else understood";[100] "what you see passes away, but the unseen—what the sign points to—does not pass away, but endures."[101] Varied sources flowed together to shape Augustine's sacramental views: his Neoplatonic ontology, his polemics against Donatists and Pelagians, and, of course, his long meditation on biblical texts, especially the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul. These varied threads within his thought would later give rise to quite divergent trajectories, first among the medieval scholastics and later among the Reformers.[102] Nearly all these strains appear, usually in nascent form, in these sermons.

[99] *Io. eu. tr.* 80.3 (CCL 36:529); trans. Rettig, FOTC 90:117. On this see Marie-François Berrouard, "Le *Tractatus* 80, 3 *in Iohannis Euangelium* de saint Augustin: La parole, le sacrement et la foi," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 33 (1987): 235–54.

[100] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1247); author's translation.

[101] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101); author's translation.

[102] On medieval and Reformation eucharistic theology and debates, essentials include: Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Marilyn McCord Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Gilles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall, eds., *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy: A Study of the Circulation of Ideas*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Esther Chung-Kim, *Inventing Authority: The Use of Church Fathers in Reformation Debates over the Eucharist* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Joel Van Amberg, *A Real Presence: Religious and Social Dynamics of the Eucharistic Conflicts in Early Modern Augsburg, 1520–1530* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Lee Palmer Wandel, ed., *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

The change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ did not preoccupy Augustine the way it would the medieval tradition. For him the consecration of the bread and wine was but one half of the mystery: the other half, the transformation of people, was what especially concerned him. He took his cues from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "The task now is to introduce you to what you have received or are about to receive—to commit it to your care—and do so not from my own heart, nor by my own presumption, nor from any human arguments, but on the authority of the Apostle. Now listen to what the Apostle says, or better what Christ says through the Apostle: 'We, being many, are one bread, one body' (1Cor 10:17)."[103] Augustine was fascinated by the dual meaning Paul gave the term "Body of Christ": that Body was, on the one hand, the people of God and, on the other, the eucharistic bread. Thus Augustine could assert bluntly: "The mystery that you are lies there on the table; it is your own mystery that you receive."[104] For Augustine the Body of Christ appeared as a sort of diptych: at once sanctified people and sanctified bread. This double image was at once fact and exhortation, an indicative and an imperative. He encapsulated this in one of his most memorable aphorisms:

Estote quod videtis,	Be what you see,
et accipite quod estis.	and receive what you are.[105]

Augustine did not conceive of real presence in strictly ritual terms. His thinking admitted no sharp fissure between the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and the real presence of Christ within the Christian community.

With this diptych of the Body of Christ as his starting point, Augustine retraced the neophytes' long journey. He began by reminding his hearers how bread was made: "Call to mind what this

[103] *s.* 229A.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:462–63); author's translation. The same Pauline phrase is cited in *Sermones* 227 and 272 (the latter having the same cautious introduction).

[104] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1247); author's translation. Cf. *Sermo* 229.2 (= *s. Denis* 6).

[105] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1247–48); author's translation.

created object [= the wheat] was, not so long ago, in the fields; how the earth produced it, the rain nourished it, ripened it into the full ear; then human labor carried it to the threshing floor, threshed it, winnowed it, stored it, brought it out, ground it, mixed it into dough, baked it, and hardly any time ago at all produced it finally as bread."[106] Augustine then would line up the steps in baking bread with those in the journey of initiation. (See chart 15.) The first step was evangelization: "You were created, you were carried to the Lord's threshing floor, you were threshed by the labor of oxen, that is, of the preachers of the gospel."[107] The threshing floor was, of course, one of Augustine's favorite images of the church, and he at times described his own role as preacher as that of an ox who threshed the wheat and chaff.[108] Here he seems to refer to any herald: whether the person who had first sponsored the neophyte or perhaps the biblical writers themselves. (Interestingly, he did not explore several of these images—seeds germinating, rain nurturing, kernels ripening—all of which imply that prior to and within all human evangelizing is God's mysterious grace giving the growth.) After evangelization "you were set aside as catechumens"; this meant, according to his bread-baking metaphor, that "you were being stored up and watched over in the granary."[109] Then during Lent "you gave in your names; then you began to be ground by fasts and exorcisms."[110] Lent was thus a milling and refining process. "Then came baptism, and you were, in a manner of speaking, moistened with water in order to be shaped into bread"[111] and "made into one lump," a single doughy mass.[112] But "it's not yet bread without fire to bake it. So what does fire represent?

[106] *s.* 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:263. Shorter descriptions of this "baking" process are found in *s.* 227 and 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7).

[107] *s.* 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:263.

[108] *Io. eu. tr.* 10.7; *en. Ps.* 126.3.

[109] *s.* 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); author's translation.

[110] *s.* 229.1 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:263. Also *s.* 227, 272; a variant appears in *s.* 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7).

[111] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1100); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:254

[112] *s.* 229 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:265. Also *s.* 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7), 272.

That's the chrism, the anointing. Oil, the fire-feeder, you see, is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit."[113] This linking of fire with chrism would be an obvious one for Augustine and his hearers since they used olive oil in the lamps that lit their houses and churches.

This extended metaphor of baking bread served Augustine both pedagogically and theologically. Pedagogically it enabled him to give the neophytes an insight into their long journey. Each stage had had its proper dynamic, each its proper meaning, yet the whole fit together. It integrated things much as the creed did: that is, just as the creed offered a way of surveying the horizon of Scripture in a single glimpse, so this bread-baking metaphor offered a way of surveying the journey of initiation in a single glimpse. It linked the diverse stages of training—evangelization and catechesis, asceticism and liturgy—within a single overarching framework. Theologically it enabled Augustine to hold together Paul's dual image of the Body of Christ—at once the people of God and the "sanctified" bread—to show that the whole dynamic moved one toward both a liturgical end—Eucharist—and an ecclesiological one—unity.

Augustine would then turn people's attention to the wine and show that it too served as an analogy for initiation, that what holds for bread baking holds for wine making. He would first cite how wine was made: that grapes grew in clusters; that they were harvested and put through a wine press so that "the juice of the grapes is poured together in one vessel."[114] Here too he pointed to its parallels in the initiation process: "And you, after those fasts, after the hard labors, after the humiliation and the contrition, have now at last come, in the name of Christ, into the Lord's cup."[115] In the analogy of fermenting wine Augustine's stress lay less on the individual steps and more on the end result: That "is how the Lord

[113] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1100); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:143. Also *s.* 229 (= *s. Denis* 6) and 272. In *s.* 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7) Augustine interprets the "fire" as temptation (playing on Eccl 27:6).

[114] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1248); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:301. Also *s.* 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7; MA 1:30), 229.2 (= *s. Denis* 6). This metaphor was inspired by Cyprian, *ep.* 69.5.

[115] *s.* 229.2 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:266.

Christ signified us, how he wished us to belong to him, how he consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on his table."[116] The neophytes would have known well what Augustine meant by "peace" and "unity." These were the traditional North African terms for the *communio* that defined being church and thus became for Augustine code words that marked out what distinguished Catholics from Donatists. As he detailed in sermon after sermon, treatise after treatise, the Donatists' great sin was their fracturing the peace and unity of the North African churches.[117] By so doing they betrayed the fundamental mystery of the Eucharist just as their rebaptizing ways betrayed the inviolability of baptism. Augustine begged his own neophytes not to imitate such contentiousness. They were to be what they saw, for the liturgy had its moorings in and was the privileged sign of genuine community: "In this sacrament you are united with us; together we are joined; together we drink, because together we live."[118] He also repeated Paul's ominous warning: that to receive the bread and cup unworthily meant eating and drinking judgment upon oneself (1 Cor 11:27-29). For Augustine that referred to "any who receive the sacrament of unity and do not hold the bond of peace."[119]

Augustine would then offer guidance on the liturgy itself. He would touch on only a few ritual moments, or "sacraments," as he called them:[120] (i) the dialogue that opened the eucharistic prayer, (ii) the great Amen, (iii) the Lord's Prayer, (iv) the kiss of peace, and (v) the words exchanged when receiving communion. Such brief mentions do not make it easy to reconstruct details of the Eucharist in Hippo. We do not know, for example, the contours of Augustine's eucharistic prayer, at least to the degree that we know that used by Cyril of Jerusalem or Ambrose. Augustine's silence about the eucharistic prayer may have stemmed from his

[116] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1248); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:301. Also *s.* 229.2 (= *s. Denis* 6), 229A.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 7).

[117] See especially *ep. Io. tr.* 1-10 and *ep.* 185.

[118] *s.* 229.2 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:30); author's translation.

[119] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1248); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:301. Cf. *s.* 227.

[120] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101): "*Magna ergo sacramenta, et valde magna*."

assessment of the pedagogical needs of his hearers: he spoke not so much about what *he* said or did during the Eucharist but about what the *neophytes themselves* would be expected to say or do. Explaining their role as faithful may have seemed more urgent, from a pedagogical standpoint, than explaining his role as presider. This meshes well with Augustine's abiding concern: that one speak ritual words not like "parrots and crows and magpies" but like a human being; that is, that one understand the meaning and import of what one is saying.[121]

Augustine focused especially on the dialogue that opened the eucharistic prayer. In his view "these mysteries are terse but powerful. We say them quickly, but their meaning and impact are great."[122] The point-counterpoint of the dialogue was, according to Augustine, a testimony to grace. The presider's "The Lord be with you" (*Dominus vobiscum*) taught that we need God's presence, for "without him we are nothing";[123] the call to lift up hearts befitted Christ's Body, which yearned to follow its Head's upward journey;[124] the giving thanks meant that uplifted hearts were a gift of God and not something ascribable "to your own powers, your own merits, your own efforts."[125]

Augustine would sometimes touch on other words and gestures expected of the neophytes. At the end of the eucharistic prayer they would "say, 'Amen.' To say 'Amen' is to add your signature."[126] He would quickly pass over the Lord's Prayer, "which you have received and given back," since he had elucidated it during Lent.[127] In explaining the kiss of peace he stressed the link between outward gesture and inner meaning: "It's a sign of peace; what is indicated by the lips should happen in the conscience; that is, just as your lips approach the lips of your brothers

[121] *en. Ps.* 18.2.1 (CSEL 93.1B:33); trans. Boulding, WSA III/15:204.
[122] *s.* 229A.3 (= *Guelf.* 7; MA 1:464); author's translation.
[123] *s.* 229A.3 (= *Guelf.* 7; MA 1:463); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:270.
[124] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1100–1).
[125] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1100); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:255. Also *s.* 229.3 (= *Denis* 6).
[126] *s.* 229.3 (= *Denis* 6; MA 1:31); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:266.
[127] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:255. Also *s.* 229.3 (= *Denis* 6).

or sisters, so your heart should not be withdrawn from theirs."[128] Given the fractious resentments Augustine's hearers were prone to, such a sign always ran the risk of being an empty gesture. Augustine, who had fought so long and so fiercely to restore unity between Catholics and Donatists wanted, at least within his own community, a sign of peace that was heartfelt. Finally, when the neophytes approached to receive the sanctified bread they would hear the words "Body of Christ," and reply "Amen." This meant: "It is to what you are that you reply 'Amen,' and by so replying you express your assent. . . . So be a member of the body of Christ in order to make that 'Amen' true."[129]

Augustine knew his brief catechesis on the Eucharist touched on only a few urgent matters: "You have heard a few things—but powerful ones. Measure worth not by number, but by weight. At the same time, these should not weigh you down: that way, you might just hold onto what has been said."[130] Augustine knew that over the previous twenty-four hours the neophytes had experienced much, and much of that had been emotionally potent. They had passed through a long fast, an all-night vigil, a whole array of rites: the solemn *redditio*, the immersions and anointing, two Eucharists. And they had heard at least four sermons: two directed to the whole assembly (sermons during the Vigil and Easter morning liturgy of the word) and two directed especially to them (the catecheses on baptism and on the Eucharist). It should not be surprising that Augustine kept his remarks on the Eucharist brief and passed over much in silence. In the days—and years—that lay ahead there would be plenty of time for exploring deeper implications.

HUNTING DOWN DEATH: EASTER WEEK

In North Africa the eight days from Easter until the following Sunday were known as "the octave days of the *infantes*."[131]

[128] *s.* 227 (PL 38:1101) trans. Hill, WSA III/6:255.

[129] *s.* 272 (PL 38:1247); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:300.

[130] *s.* 229.3 (= *s. Denis* 6; MA 1:32); author's translation.

[131] *s.* 376A.1 (PL 39:1669); author's translation. See also *ep.* 55.32, *s.* 260, 260A.4 (= *s. Denis* 8).

Throughout the week the newly baptized continued to wear their white robes and to stand together within the privileged confines of the *cancelli*—set off from the larger assembly both by dress and by location. Eucharistic liturgies were held daily, and Augustine preached at least twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. As Suzanne Poque has noted, "In Hippo, the Octave of Easter was a week especially set aside for catechesis, and the faithful were no less eager for instruction than the newly-baptized"; nonetheless, this catechesis was not reserved for neophytes and faithful, but was open to all.[132]

During the morning liturgy of the word, the curriculum set by the lectionary followed a fixed rhythm: "During these days we have the accounts read of the Lord's resurrection according to all our evangelists. The reason it's necessary for all of them to be read is that they didn't each say everything, but one said what another passed over, and after a fashion they all made way for each other so that all of them would be needed."[133] From the sermons that have come down to us it is clear that at some point during Augustine's career the order of these resurrection pericopes shifted.[134] Nonetheless, the theme remained the same: "These holy days which are being celebrated after the Lord's resurrection stand for the life that will be ours after our resurrection."[135] Augustine took special pains to spell out the meaning and implications of this, for,

[132] Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 91. However, she may overstate things slightly when she claims that "les allocutions qui s'addressent spécialement aux nouveaux baptisés ne leur sont pas pour autant réservées." Augustine refers directly to the neophytes from time to time and often touches on topics of concern to them, but during Easter Week the neophytes were one group among several that Augustine took pains to address.

[133] *s.* 234.1 (PL 38:1115); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:36. See also *ep. Io. tr.* prologus; *s.* 231.1, 232.1, 235.1, 239.1, etc.

[134] See Lambot, "Les sermons de saint Augustin pour les fêtes de Pâques," 148–72. Suzanne Poque has claimed to find two additional *ordines*; see her "Les lectures liturgiques de l'octave pascale à Hippone d'après les Traités de saint Augustin sur la Première Epître de S. Jean," *Revue biblique* 74 (1964): 217–41, summarized in "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 85–91.

[135] *s.* 243.8 (PL 38:1147); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:93.

as he repeatedly noted, "The distinctive mark of the faith of Christians is the resurrection of the dead."[136] He knew it was precisely this belief that pagans mocked. To deal with this he once offered a special three-session series on pagan philosophers and their objections to bodily resurrection (*Sermons* 240-242). On this occasion he wanted not so much to shore up people's faith as to train them as "good doctors" for those who suffered the "wounds of doubt and unbelief."[137]

After the morning liturgy Augustine would take his familiar place in the apse of the main basilica and there would field questions from neophytes and faithful. On one occasion the participants were interested in learning how to answer pagan objections to Christianity.[138] To help equip people for this apologetic work a mock debate was set up. Augustine took the Christian side, while some of the assembly took the pagan side and challenged him to rebut subtle arguments on pagan oracles and divine providence. On another occasion, it seems, he took on a host of knotty problems within the Scriptures.[139]

In the evening, beginning on Easter Sunday, Augustine would offer a series on some special topic. One year, for instance, he spoke about the seven days of creation.[140] Another year—the same

[136] *s.* 241.1 (PL 38:1133); author's translation. See also *s.* 229H.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 12); 234.3.

[137] *s.* 240.1 (PL 38:1131); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:65.

[138] *diuin. daem.* 1.1-2.6 (CSEL 41:597–603).

[139] *s.* 259.6 (PL 38:1201). This sermon was given on the Octave; the implication seems to be that scriptural questions raised at a previous question-and-answer session had been left unanswered and Augustine felt obliged not to leave them so. Apparently it was unusual to hold such an open session on the Sunday of the Octave.

[140] *s.* 229R-229V (PL 39:1724–29). John the Deacon (9th c.) preserved fragments of these sermons. For a study see Cyrille Lambot, "Une série pascale de sermons de saint Augustin sur les jours de la Création," *Revue Bénédictine* 79 (1969): 206–14. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, 20n50, notes the links between the figural interpretation of Genesis in these sermon fragments and that found in *conf.* 13; see also Isabelle Bochet, *'Le firmament de l'Écriture': L'herméneutique augustinienne*, CEASA 172 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2004), 230–31.

year he offered the intertwining series on the Psalms and John's gospel—he spoke on 1 John.[141] He chose this text partly because it offered a way to continue listening to "blessed John whose gospel we have set aside for a while" and partly because its distinctive theme, charity, seemed especially well-suited to the joy of Easter.[142]

In these sermons Augustine would draw on a host of images, both from the Scriptures and from the local milieu, to tease out the meaning of Christ's resurrection. He would portray Christ as a teacher who made the cross his professorial chair,[143] as a merchant who imported into the land of birth and death an exotic novelty—eternal life,[144] as a physician whose blood became the medicine to cure his killers and whose scars became the medicine to heal the wounds of unbelief that festered in the apostles' hearts.[145] For Augustine and his hearers, time was the great ravager. And so he portrayed it as a swirling river that swept away everything in its fierce wake; thus Christ, whose roots lay in eternity, gave all a handhold against time's destructive coursings: "Time's river sweeps things down it, but there, like a tree born alongside the river, is our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . He planted himself, so to speak, alongside time's river. Are you rushing headlong down the rapids? Grab the tree!"[146]

Frequently Augustine paired christological images with exhortations to the newly baptized. He would portray Christ as a wealthy man who paid off our debts and tore up the devil's promissory note. With this he turned to the neophytes and reminded them that they had sworn to follow a new way of life and had been baptized, and that the Lord had given them a prayer to free them from

[141] *ep. Io. tr.*, prologus; cf. *Io. eu. tr.* 13.1. On this work see Paul Agaësse, "Introduction," *Augustin d'Hippone: Commentaire de la première épître de s. Jean*, SC 75:7–102.

[142] *ep. Io. tr.*, prologus (SC 75:104); author's translation.

[143] *s.* 234.2 (PL 38:1116). Cf. *s.* 232.5-6.

[144] *s.* 233.4 (PL 38:1113–14). See also *s.* 229H.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 12).

[145] *s.* 229E.2-3 (= *s. Guelf.* 9; MA 1:468–70). These images appear frequently: *s.* 229J.1 (= *s. Guelf. App.* 7), 229O.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 17), 237.3, 242.2; *ep. Io. tr.* 2.1; 5.5; 6.8.

[146] *ep. Io. tr.* 2.10 (SC 75:170); author's translation.

incurring further debt.[147] Similarly, Augustine would portray Christ as a sojourner from a foreign land, searching for hospitality. Thus his hearers, like the disciples from Emmaus, were to offer him shelter and recognize him in the breaking of the bread. Augustine knew that only insiders—who now included the neophytes—would have the eyes to spot this eucharistic allusion and noted how they joined in the cheering.[148] But he was equally concerned that they see its implications for justice: "So here let hungry Christ be fed, the thirsty Christ be given a drink, the naked Christ be clothed, the pilgrim Christ be lodged, the ill Christ be visited. Those are the journey's necessities. So that's how to live things out on this pilgrimage—where Christ is in need."[149] Finally, Augustine portrayed Christ as a great hunter who slew death, a fierce lion that had long terrorized humankind. The neophytes got to enjoy the spoils—"Oh, what life, the death of death! Be of good heart, it will also die in us"—and got to join in Paul's taunt: "Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?"[150]

Augustine insisted that faith in the resurrection set Christians apart. It meant that they did not share their culture's stock prejudices against the body, for—he insisted—"our faith praises the body."[151] Some of Christianity's most learned opponents, such as Plotinus's disciple, Porphyry of Gaza, found such views absurd: "You [Christians] have no grounds to praise the body to me; whatever sort of body it might be, if the soul wishes to be happy, every kind of body is to be shunned."[152] Some pagans would base their objections on ancient physics. To them it seemed absurd that

[147] *s.* 229E.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 9; MA 1:468–70).

[148] *s.* 234.2 (PL 38:1116). See also *s.* 235.2, 3. In *s.* 229E.4 (= *s. Guelf.* 9) this allusion also roused applause.

[149] *s.* 236.3 (PL 38:1121); author's translation. See also *s.* 239.2.

[150] *s.* 233.5 (PL 38:1114); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:34.

[151] *s.* 241.7 (PL 38:1137); author's translation.

[152] Porphyry, quoted in *s.* 241.7 (PL 38:1137); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:74 See also *ep.* 102.1; *ciu. dei* 10.23-32; 22.25-27. On Porphyry's views on Christianity see Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 126–63; Frederik Van Fleteren, "Porphyry," *ATA*, 661–63.

the human body—made of the stuff of earth, and thus heavy and slow-moving—could rise up to God the way the fleet and airy soul could. Augustine found their physics wanting: If a blacksmith could make iron bowls that floated on water, could not a body transformed by God have a remarkable lightness? Did bulk necessarily slow things down? Why then did the airy spider move ponderously while the bulky horse ran like the wind?[153] At other times scoffers mocked the ugliness of the body—its internal organs such as intestines and lungs—and asked what use genitals or breasts or teeth would have after such a resurrection. Augustine would counter these jibes. As he saw it, every element within the body—whether internal organs or genitals or teeth—possessed a God-given beauty. The body's beauty came from harmony, like "tuned strings on a lute," and "if all the strings were tuned the same, there would be no song; for from diverse-strung strings spring diverse sounds."[154] For Augustine the body possessed its own harmony, its own musicality. Thus, he insisted, at the resurrection the body would be restored, whole and untarnished; shame and lust would vanish, and even if parts of our bodies, like breasts or genitals, would no longer serve practical needs, they would still exist because of their beauty.[155] And most important, God would heal the ancient fissure between our bodies and our interiority. This, he insisted, was what the apostle Paul meant by a "spiritual body": that at the resurrection we would enjoy what Adam enjoyed: a body that would obey the spirit's direction.[156]

In these sermons Augustine would exhort his hearers to cling to the church and its faith. Orthodoxy meant sailing "between Scylla and Charybdis," between the "ship-wrecking rocks" of Sabellianism and the "ship-swallowing whirlpool" of Arianism.[157] His hearers were to believe as the church believed: in the whole Christ, truly

[153] *s.* 242.6-7 (PL 38:1136–38).

[154] *s.* 243.4 (PL 38:1145); author's translation.

[155] *s.* 243.6 (PL 38:1146).

[156] *s.* 242.11 (PL 38:1142–43). On this issue see Brian Schmisek, "Augustine's Use of 'Spiritual Body,'" *Augustinian Studies* 35 (2004): 237–52.

[157] *s.* 229G.4 (= *s. Guelf.* 11; MA 1:476–77); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:291.

Word and truly human—and not just the divine mind in a human body, but a person with a fully human psychology—for "as he created the whole human person, so he redeemed the whole; the Word took on the whole person, he set the whole person free."[158] But right belief was not enough. Right practice—charity—was the acid test of true Christianity. He highlighted this especially in his series on the epistle of John. In *Tractate* 2 he exhorted the neophytes:

> Our brothers and sisters [here] have now been born again of water and the Spirit. We too some years ago were born again of water and Spirit. . . . The groundwork of salvation is this: having the root of charity, having the [inner] strength of holiness, not merely its [outer] form. The form is good, the form is holy, but what is the form worth if it does not hold to the root. The cut-off branch: Is it not tossed on the fire? But how can you be rooted that you not be uprooted? By holding to charity—as the apostle Paul said: "rooted and grounded in charity."[159]

Augustine insisted that outward pieties were not enough. For him the Donatists were vivid proof that pieties mattered little if one had breached charity. As he sarcastically put it: "Let them all sign themselves with the sign of the cross of Christ. Let them all respond Amen. Let them all sing Alleluia. Let them all be baptized, come to church, put up walls for [new] basilicas. You cannot discern the children of God from the children of the devil *except* by charity."[160] Augustine cited the neophytes as proof that possessing the Spirit lay in charity: at their anointing they did not speak in tongues as the first disciples in Acts had. This meant that the gift of the Spirit now manifested itself in love of neighbor.[161] And

[158] *s.* 237.4 (PL 38:1124); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:54. Through these sermons Augustine uses a variety of heresies as foils for the Catholic position: Manichaeism (*s.* 229J.1 [= *s. Guelf. App.* 7], 237.1, 238.2); Priscillianism (*s.* 238.2); Photinianism (*s.* 246.4, 375C [= *s. Mai* 95]); Sabellianism (*s.* 229G.3-5 [= *s. Guelf.* 11]); Arianism (*s.* 229G.4-5 [= *s. Guelf.* 11]); Apollinarianism (*s.* 237.4, 253.4).

[159] *ep. Io. tr.* 2.9 (SC 75:168–70); author's translation.

[160] *ep. Io. tr.* 5.7 (SC 75:260); author's translation.

[161] *ep. Io. tr.* 6.10 (SC 75:298–300). See also *s.* 229U; 229V; 249.3.

that charity expressed itself especially in one's care of the poor. Augustine, for his part, would have preferred a truly just social order: "You give bread to the hungry, but it would be better if no one were hungry and you gave to no one. You clothe the naked. Would that all were clothed and there weren't this need!"[162] Nonetheless, given an unjust world, the beginning of charity lay in care for the poor.[163] Thus Augustine encouraged the neophytes to make a beginning: their birth into God, unlike their birth into the world, had been something willed, and "when there is a birth in the will, then there is also a growing up in the will." But this growth is Spirit-driven.[164]

CHIRPING TO FLEDGLINGS LEAVING THE NEST: THE OCTAVE

The days of leisure ended on the Sunday after Easter. The next day the routine of work and the wrangling of the law courts would begin afresh.[165] For the neophytes this Sunday marked the end of their long journey, and they would be—for one last time—the center of attention. Augustine would tell them that this Sunday marked the "eighth day after your birth; today there is completed in you the seal of faith."[166] The ceremonies that day were to be a distant echo, a figure, of the old Jewish rites of circumcision held on the eighth day after birth. But since, in the Christian dispensation, birth into the people of God was an event of the spirit, so too was its eighth day: this "sacrament of the Octave" would signal the neophytes' "circumcision of heart."[167]

The day was, according to Augustine, a busy one.[168] Unfortunately, we know only a little of what made it so busy. Early in the morning, it seems, people gathered at the Memoria of the Twenty Martyrs, a

[162] *ep. Io. tr.* 8.5 (SC 75:348); trans. Ramsey, WSA III/14:119.

[163] *ep. Io. tr.* 6.1 (SC 75:276–78). See also *s.* 229S.

[164] *ep. Io. tr.* 3.1 (SC 75:186); trans. Ramsey, WSA III/14:52.

[165] *s.* 259.6 (PL 38:1201).

[166] *s.* 260A.4 (= *s. Denis* 8; MA 1:38). See also *s.* 260C.2 (= *s. Mai* 94), 376A.2. See Martin Klöckener, "Octauae," *Aug-Lex* 4 (2012): 274–77.

[167] *s.* 260 (PL 38:1202); author's translation.

[168] *s.* 260 (PL 38:1201–2).

shrine built to honor those killed during the persecution of Diocletian. In the brief sermons given there, there is no explicit mention of the neophytes, but scholars presume they were present. It is not clear whether this liturgy was held especially for their benefit, as Poque believes, or was addressed only to a pious elite, as Perler supposes.[169] An instruction at a martyrs' shrine certainly formed part of the mystagogical routine in Antioch and may have done so in Hippo as well.[170] Augustine would invite all present—presumably including the neophytes—to bear witness to their faith with the same fervor and courage their spiritual ancestors, the martyrs, had shown: "You too must say: 'We cannot *not* speak of what we have heard. We cannot *not* preach Christ the Lord.' Proclaim Christ wherever you can, to whomever you can, in whatever way you can."[171]

Later that day Augustine gave a final admonition to the neophytes.[172] During the previous week they had stood as living icons:

[169] Othmar Perler, "La 'Memoria des Vingt Martyrs' d'Hippone-la-Royale," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 2 (1956): 435–46, at 438–39; Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 118n4.

[170] Finn, *Liturgy of Baptism*, 211.

[171] *s.* 260E.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 19; MA 1:503); author's translation.

[172] The remaining Octave sermons fall into two groups: (1) a sermon on the readings of the day, probably given at the main liturgy, and (2) the final admonition to the neophytes. Augustine delivered at least one of the first type (*s.* 258) in the *Basilica Maior* (i.e., the *Basilica Pacis*), and at least one of the second type (*s.* 260) in the *Basilica Leontiana*. According to Perler the *Leontiana* was perhaps the old cathedral, still used on certain occasions, and may well have been the smaller five-naved basilica that archaeologists have uncovered not far from the main church. This suggests two possibilities: (a) both the sermon on the readings and the exhortation to the neophytes were given during a single liturgy, and this took place in the *Basilica Maior* in certain years and in the *Leontiana* in others, or (b) the sermon on the readings was given in the *Maior* while the exhortation to the neophytes was given in the *Leontiana*. If the second was the case, this would mean that each of the three Octave sermons took place in a different edifice and the assembly would have had to process from site to site, hearing a sermon at each. Moving from site to site, from liturgy to liturgy, was certainly part of the routine in Jerusalem during this same period. See Poque, "Introduction," SC 116 (2003): 112–15; Othmar Perler, "L'église principale et les autres sanctuaires chrétiens d'Hippone la Royale, d'après les textes de saint Augustin," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 1 (1955):

clustered together within the *cancelli*, dressed conspicuously in white robes.[173] They had stood before the assembly as a visual reminder of the high demands and great promise of baptism. On the Octave, the neophytes' infancy ended. They had come of age. They put off their white robes and mixed in once more with the larger assembly. This final rite of passage left Augustine feeling at once joyous and anxious: "You see: today, the *infantes* mix with the faithful—as if flying out of the nest. It is necessary then that we midwives address them. As you know, brothers and sisters, when young swallows . . . begin to fly out of the nest, their mothers flap around them noisily and, with dutiful chirpings, testify to dangers their children face."[174] Augustine would then begin chirping about the dangers his own fledglings faced. Like Chrysostom, he would focus on their baptismal robes. He reminded the neophytes that they, like the prodigal son, had once fed pigs, but they had given it up and journeyed a long road to be clad at last in new robes;[175] that they wore gleaming white on the outside because they had been cleansed bright on the inside,[176] and that even though they would soon take off "the outer signs of the sacraments" they must "always wear them in the heart."[177]

But Augustine focused more often on the neophytes' leaving the nest of the *cancelli*. This liturgical action reminded Augustine of his threshing-floor image of church. As he saw it, this rite of passage meant that the neophytes would once more find themselves mixed in with the chaff. So he would exhort them: "Do not get mixed up with the bad mores in the crowd of bad Christians. See what I say: Be grain!"[178] He did not fear their being influenced by

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299–343; for an archaeological description of the "basilica with five naves" see Marec, *Monuments chrétiens d'Hippone*, 183–212; Lancel, *Saint Augustine*, trans. Antonia Nevill (London: SCM Press, 2002), 241–44.

[173] *s.* 260C.7 (= *s. Mai* 94; MA 1:338). See also *s.* 229P.4 (= *s. Lambot* 3) and 260.

[174] *s.* 376A.2 (PL 39:1670); author's translation.

[175] *s.* 260C.5 (= *s. Mai* 94; MA 1:337).

[176] *s.* 223.1 (PL 38:1092). See also *s.* 260C.7 (= *s. Mai* 94).

[177] *s.* 260C.7 (= *s. Mai* 94; MA 1:338); author's translation.

[178] *s.* 260D.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 18; MA 1:500); author's translation. Playing on the image of separating the catch of fish, Augustine appeals to this in his Easter Friday sermons: *s.* 248.2-3, 249.2, 250.2, 251.3.

pagans or heretics but rather by the crowd of bad Catholics: "We know that many of those who are called 'the faithful' live bad lives, and that their behavior doesn't correspond with the grace they have received; they praise God with their tongue, blaspheme him with their lives."[179] Again and again Augustine gave the same advice—that the neophytes should seek out and imitate exemplary Christians: "Seek out the good, cling to the good, *be* good" (*Bonos quaerite, bonis adhaerete, boni estote*).[180] In these admonitions Augustine often mixed agricultural metaphors with rhymes. The neophytes were still "tender new shoots . . . in the field of God";[181] they had been "irrigated by the fountain of wisdom, drenched with the light of justice."[182] Christ "our farmer" had planted them to be "wheat-sprigs" (*spicas*), not "thorns" (*spinas*).[183]

Augustine often listed the "thorns" he feared most. The neophytes were to guard against business fraud and usury, against drunkenness and luxurious living, against lying and gossip, against consulting fortune-tellers and wearing amulets, against fornication and adultery.[184] Sometimes, in the course of such admonitions, he would shift his attention to the faithful and single out for rebuke men who used house slaves as sexual partners or kept a concubine on the side. In Augustine's time Christians abhorred adultery, but some would distinguish between going to a prostitute and visiting the slave quarters. They could claim that such-and-such a woman "isn't a whore, she's my concubine."[185] Augustine was outraged by such behavior and did not mince words: "It is

[179] *s.* 376A.2 (PL 39:1670); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:348. See also *s.* 260.

[180] *s.* 223.1 (PL 38:1092); author's translation. See also *s.* 224; 260D.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 18); 260C.7 (= *s. Mai* 94).

[181] *s.* 260B.1 (= *s. Mai* 89; MA 1:330); author's translation.

[182] *s.* 223.1 (PL 38:1092); author's translation.

[183] *s.* 223.2 (PL 38:1093), 376A.2 (PL 39:1670); author's translation.

[184] *s.* 224; 260; and 260D.2 (= *s. Guelf.* 18).

[185] *s.* 224.3 (PL 38:1095); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:243. Note that there are two recensions of this sermon. The Maurist text is PL 38:1093–95; Cyrille Lambot has published the other in "Le sermon CCXXIV et saint Augustin et ses recensions interpolées," *Revue Bénédictine* 79 (1969): 193–205. Hill, WSA III/6:244n1, speculates that the differences are due to two stenographers.

wrong, wrong, wrong"; such women made themselves "whores"—"Go and tell her, 'The bishop has insulted you' "; and men who carry on this way "will go to hell."[186] Moreover, Augustine resorted to humor to chide wayward faithful who put off reform, who would say, "tomorrow" (*cras*): "Look, as often as you say 'Tomorrow, tomorrow,' '*Cras*, *cras*' you have become a crow."[187] Finally, he would exhort the veterans, those baptized one year or many years before. They were to take the neophytes under their wing without, of course, leading them down the road of perdition.[188]

Augustine offered the neophytes no illusions about life on the far side of baptism. Using Exodus imagery, he reminded them that while they had indeed crossed the Red Sea they had yet to enter the Promised Land; that while they need not fear a rearguard attack from enemies drowned in the Red Sea of the font, desert wanderings still lay ahead of them.[189] In this desert sojourn they would face the same mix of joy and temptation the Jewish people had faced. They too might find the journey tiring, and so he warned: "Don't let your hearts, like inner taste buds, lose their sense of taste out of contempt for the word of God, like loathing for the manna." They too might have to drink a bitter cup, and so he encouraged: "Imitate the patience of the Lord so that those waters may turn sweet by your throwing in, as it were, the wood of the cross." They too would face serpents' venom and be healed by gazing at the medicinal cross of Christ. They too would face enemies and defeat them with prayer, with arms uplifted and stretched out in the sign of the cross.[190]

Augustine also explored the symbolism of the Octave. As he saw it, its preeminent meaning was eschatological: "Today is a great sacrament, [a sign] for us of unending joy. Today itself will pass away, but the life it symbolizes will not pass away. . . . For this

[186] *s.* 224.3 (PL 38:1095); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:245n19.

[187] *s.* 224.4 (PL 38:1095); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:244.

[188] *s.* 260D.3 (= *s. Guelf.* 18; MA 1:501); author's translation. See also *s.* 223.2.

[189] *s.* 353.2 (PL 39:1562). See also *s.* 260.1 and 259.3.

[190] *s.* 353.2 (PL 39:1562); trans. Hill, WSA III/10:154. See also *s.* 260B.1 (= *s. Mai* 89).

day, the Octave, symbolizes the new life at the world's end."[191] According to Augustine the Octave offered a dim, fleeting foretaste of that day when the church would appear no longer as an unsifted mass of wheat and chaff. On that final day only fine-milled wheat would remain and—Augustine would add ominously—"we know where chaff ends up."[192] As he saw it, the vast scope of history converged—albeit via liturgical signs and passing feelings—within Easter week. On the sixth day of creation God had impressed his image on humankind; in the sixth age of history Christ had restored that image; and so at the Vigil, "as if on the sixth day of the whole era, we are renovated in baptism so that we may receive our maker's image." On the seventh day of creation God rested; in the seventh age of history the future rest of the saints on this earth will take place; and so the church had celebrated a seven-day Sabbath. Finally, on the eighth day Christ rose with body renewed, separating light from dark as on the first day of creation; in the eighth and final age "we shall return to that immortality, that blessedness, from which humankind tumbled." It was "why this Octave rounds off the sacraments of the *infantes*."[193] The Octave thus set world history against an eschatological horizon, and for Augustine and for his congregation the neophytes stood as the fragile bearers of that accumulated symbolic weight. Thus he would exhort the neophytes to "keep your eyes firmly on that eighth day."[194]

It was within this eschatological perspective that Augustine once ventured a long and eloquent plea on behalf of the poor. He stressed "the medicinal power in good works of mercy." He noted that those who had suffered shipwreck sympathized with other victims of shipwreck, that ex-slaves sympathized with the plight of others enslaved, that farm laborers felt compassion for those deprived of rightful pay, that a father who had lost a child—as

[191] *s.* 259.1-2 (PL 38:1196); author's translation. See also *s.* 260C.1 (= *s. Mai* 94).

[192] *s.* 259.2 (PL 38:1197); author's translation.

[193] *s.* 259.2 (PL 38:1198); trans. Hill, WSA III/6:178. See also *s.* 260C.2-6 (= *s. Mai* 94).

[194] *s.* 260C.6 (= *s. Mai* 94; MA 1:338); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:198. See also *s.* 259.1.

Augustine himself once had—shared in the lament of parents grieving over children who had died, that "therefore no matter how hard the human heart, shared suffering softens it." Augustine wished that the "common bond of human nature" would be enough to bend people to mercy, but he recognized that more often people remained wounded healers. Thus he begged the neophytes and others to recognize their own wounds—"to fear what you have not been, to remember what you have been, and to consider what you may be"—and thus to show mercy to others as God had shown and would yet show mercy to them. And, Augustine insisted, these works of mercy always had to be done with great sensitivity, with graciousness and humility. Almsgiving held a profound lesson: that when the giver's hand is placed in the needy person's hand the giver learns compassion and glimpses the depths of our "common humanity and common infirmity."[195]

Augustine knew that many of the neophytes would leave that day and travel home to small towns or farms, and that many would not return except, perhaps, for some major celebration.[196] He thus pleaded that they faithfully attend church: "Come back often and visit this mother who gave you birth. See what she has brought together: she has united creature to Creator, making slaves into children of God. . . . You won't seem ungrateful of such great favors received from her if you offer her the gift of your presence."[197] He would beg them: "Do not forsake such a mother"—as he had once abandoned his own mother, Monnica, and left her standing on the docks of Carthage while he sailed off to Rome. Rather, they should come daily for Spirit-filled food: "the bread from heaven" and "the cup of salvation." Finally, he pleaded, be "worthy children . . . devotedly reared by her and brought through, safe and sound and free, to eternal life."[198]

[195] *s.* 259.3-5 (PL 38:1198–1201); author's translation. See also *ep. Io. tr.* 8.5.
[196] *s.* 259.4 (PL 38:1199). Cf. *cura mort.* 12.15.
[197] *s.* 255A (= *s. Mai* 92/*Wilm.* 18; MA 1:332–33); author's translation.
[198] *s.* 255A (= *s. Mai* 92/*Wilm.* 18; MA 1:333); trans. Hill, WSA III/7:166.

MYSTAGOGY TUNED TO THE KEY OF THE END TIME

Augustine's mystagogy, like that of his contemporaries, drew together various threads: (i) liturgical gestures and words from the Vigil and Easter liturgies; (ii) scriptural themes and images; (iii) analogies from nature or culture. These threads came together into a distinct weave due to (a) local ritual practices, (b) Augustine's theological stance and personal temperament, and (c) the local culture and milieu. Like his contemporaries, Augustine catechized on the rites of the Vigil and, like them, he maintained a silence about the Eucharist itself until after the neophytes had experienced it. While he did offer catecheses on baptism and Eucharist, the individual moments within these liturgies did not shape his mystagogical curriculum the way they did for Ambrose, Cyril, and Theodore. Augustine stood closer to John Chrysostom both in timetable and in emphasis: both men catechized on baptism prior to the rite itself and both brought a paraenetic slant to their catechesis.[199]

Using analogies, Augustine would draw out the mystery and paradox of Christ so that here, as before, Christ appeared in varied guises: as a deep-rooted tree in time's rushing stream, as a hunter whose quarry was death itself, as a physician whose scars healed the wounds of unbelief. Sometimes he used image clusters as maps for tracing out the neophytes' journey. With his baking-bread metaphor he helped them to grasp the dynamic underlying each stage of initiation and to see that initiation moved toward both a liturgical *telos*—Eucharist—and an ecclesiological one—unity with God's people. With his Exodus typology he showed the neophytes that by entering the church they had not entered some Promised Land; that they had instead embarked on a desert sojourn and that, for its duration, life would remain a mixed blessing.

[199] The similarity may stem partly from the fact both were trained as rhetoricians, an art in which exhortation figured prominently. Also, at least late in his life, Augustine testifies to a familiarity with at least one of Chrysostom's sermons to neophytes and used it in his debate with Julian: Jean-Paul Bouhot, "Version inédite du sermon '*Ad Neophytos*' de S. Jean Chrysostome, utilisée par S. Augustin," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 17 (1971): 27–41; Paul W. Harkins, "Chrysostom's *Sermo ad Neophytos*," *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970): 112–17.

Augustine, like St. Paul, reminded people to guard the traditions, those terse formulae that he had handed over and they had received. Augustine cited four: two given during Lent—the "sacraments" of the creed and the Lord's Prayer—and two given during the Triduum—the sacraments of the font and the altar. The first two were verbal emblems, catechetical heirlooms to be treasured and passed from one generation to the next; they were to be held as laconic, venerable reminders of a long, meandering journey through God's mysteries. The latter two were enacted symbols whose meaning Augustine found best expressed by St. Paul: that in baptism the neophytes had been buried together with Christ; that in Eucharist they had become one with the one Body of Christ.

While Augustine made little use of the sequence of the liturgy for his curricular outline, nonetheless his mystagogical reflections often revolved around liturgy: its words, its movements, its objects, even its calendar dates. Most often Augustine used these as starting points for excursions into salvation history, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology. In his catecheses the sweep and swirl of time came to the fore. He saw in the liturgical present a convergence of past and future, of history and eternity. Various moments or movements within the liturgies echoed moments or movements spanning from the dawn of creation to the final trumpet blast of end-time. Thus the white-robed neophytes stood before the larger assembly as living sacraments: they were the first day of a new creation, embodied proof that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among us, the tangible sign of history's Octave when humanity would stand again sealed with the impress of God's image.

One point should not be overlooked or underestimated: all these symbolic reverberations within the liturgies of Easter came to the fore only because Augustine spelled them out verbally. In other words, Augustine the liturgist and sacramental theologian was at one and the same time Augustine the catechist, and it was precisely as catechist that he did his liturgical and sacramental ruminating. He "liturgized" catechetically, that is, publicly, orally. And he chose this public, oral medium because he considered these matters vital to the faith education both of the newly baptized and of the larger assembly. Sometimes a pragmatic pedagogical assessment shaped

liturgical catechesis: e.g., his focusing on the neophytes' role within the Eucharist, a rite that was new to them. More often he was concerned that people see through sacramental emblems to their inner meanings. Yet for Augustine as catechist and mystagogue, expounding the mysteries did not mean explaining them away. Rather, it meant both piling up and uncovering the dense cluster of meanings and letting them set off vibrations among themselves. For Augustine mysteries had consequences: they shaped how one saw Christ and the church, how one felt and probed one's heart, and how one treated everyone else. The neophytes were to be what they saw and receive what they were—the Body of Christ—and that meant being people rooted and grounded in charity.

Still, Augustine's mystagogy was not so much liturgical as eschatological. For him *the* mystery was end-time, and teaching on mystery meant situating things—life and liturgy, salvation history and the history of one's heart—against that final horizon. This perspective was conditioned in part by the lectionary tradition in his church, in part by pagan antagonists who thought the resurrection of the flesh a crude thing, and in part by Augustine's own theological and philosophical outlook. His debate with the Donatists, his long meditation on his abiding weaknesses, and his painful awareness of the half-sifted mix of good and bad within his own congregation had left him acutely aware that baptism was only a beginning, admittedly dramatic, but a beginning nonetheless. He had no wish that the *infantes* simply be socialized into his church, for on this side of the eschaton that church would remain very much a mix of wheat and chaff. He considered mere socializing a threat. Thus he begged the neophytes to imitate the good and begged the good to take the neophytes under their wing. Repeatedly he presented the neophytes as the fragile icons of creation's eighth day—that mystery the eye could not see nor ear hear, a timeless time when humanity would stand restored in body and spirit, in heart and society, and peer into the mystery that God is. He wanted the neophytes, the assembly, and himself to keep eyes fixed on that eighth day and order their pilgrimage accordingly. And that meant imagining a new world where justice was the norm and poverty had been overcome. But for these times

in-between, set within end-time's horizon, works of mercy were an imperative. The poor were to be fed, clothed, sheltered, welcomed, for in them the body of Christ still suffered, and they stood before all as an indictment against an unjust social order and as poignant bearers of the mystery too often fled from or ignored: that all human beings shared a common humanity and common infirmity.

Chart 12

Sermons for the Easter Vigil

Sermon	Latin Text	Translation
1. Liturgy of the Word: To the Whole Assembly		
Sermon 219	PL 38: 1087–88	WSA III/6: 198–99
Sermon 220	PL 38: 1089	WSA III/6: 200–1
Sermon 221 = s. Guelf. 5	MA 1: 457–60	WSA III/6: 202–6
Sermon 222	PL 38: 1090–91	WSA III/6: 207–8
Sermon 223A = s. Denis 2	MA 1: 11–17	WSA III/6: 212–19
Sermon 223B = s. Guelf 4	MA 1: 455–56	WSA III/6: 220–21
Sermon 223C = s. Guelf 6	MA 1: 460–62	WSA III/6: 222–23
Sermon 223D = s. Wilmart 4	MA 1: 684–85	WSA III/6: 224–25
Sermon 223E = s. Wilmart 5	MA 1: 685–87	WSA III/6: 226–28
Sermon 223F = s. Wilmart 6	MA 1: 688–89	WSA III/6: 229–30
Sermon 223G = s. Wilmart 7	MA 1: 689–91	WSA III/6: 231–33
Sermon 223H = s. Wilmart add. [14]	MA 1: 716–17	WSA III/6: 234–35
Sermon 223I = s. Wilmart add. [15]	MA 1: 717–18	WSA III/6: 236–37
Sermon 223J = s. Wilmart add. [16]	MA 1: 718	WSA III/6: 238–39
Sermon 223K = s. Wilmart add. [17]	MA 1: 718–19	WSA III/6: 240–41
Sermon 363	PL 39: 1634–38	WSA III/10: 270–75

Note: The authenticity of *Sermon* 223A is contested. Others may also have been delivered at the Vigil: *Sermons 299B (= s. Guelf. 8); 229C (= s. Wilmart 8), and 229D (= s. Wilmart 9)*

2. Baptismal Catechesis: to the competentes

[Nothing of this has been preserved; it is referred to in *Sermons* 228 and 229A (= *s. Guelf.* 7). It was given sometime on Saturday, either in the course of the Vigil or perhaps earlier in the day.]

Chart 13

The Rites of Initiation: Comparison of the North African Rite with Others

Carthage (ca. 200): Tertullian	Jerusalem (ca. 380): Cyril	Milan (ca. 390): Ambrose	Hippo (ca. 400–425): Augustine
Renunciation of Satan "in the assembly . . . under the bishop's hand"			
		Rite of "opening" (*ephphatha*)	
		Strip off clothes	
		Anointing by deacon or presbyter	
Renunciation of Satan "when entering the water"	Facing west: Renunciation of Satan	Facing west: Renunciation of "devil . . . world and its pleasures"	Facing west: Renunciation of Satan
	Turn round from west to east: Vow to the Trinity	Turn round from west to east: Vow to Christ	Turn round from west to east: Vow to Christ
	Strip off clothes		Strip off clothes
	Anointing with "exorcised oil" head to foot		Anointing before baptism(?)
Consecration of the baptismal waters invoking the Holy Spirit		Consecration of the baptismal waters, first by exorcism, then by invocation of the Trinity	Consecration of the baptismal waters by sign of cross & name of Christ
Baptism: triple interrogation and triple immersion	Baptism: triple interrogation and triple immersion	Baptism: triple interrogation and triple immersion	Baptism: triple interrogation and triple immersion
Anointing with blessed oil	Anointing with chrism on forehead, ears, nostrils, breast	Anointing with chrism	Anointing with chrism
		Washing of the feet	
	Clothed in white robe	Clothed in white robe	Clothed in white robe, wear sandals

Chart 13—Cont'd

The Rites of Initiation: Comparison of the North African Rite with Others

Carthage (ca. 200): Tertullian	Jerusalem (ca. 380): Cyril	Milan (ca. 390): Ambrose	Hippo (ca. 400–425): Augustine
Hand laying "inviting the Holy Spirit to come"		"Spiritual seal" (hand laying? anointing? prayer for gifts of Spirit?)	Hand laying with invocation of "sevenfold Spirit"
	Procession to Anastasis, hymn sung		*Infantes:* pray Lord's Prayer (here or just after emerging from font)
Eucharist (also includes taste of milk and honey)	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist

Chart 14

Sermons Mentioning Neophytes

Sermon	Text	Translation	Day
1. Easter Liturgy: to the whole assembly			
Sermon 119	PL 38: 673–76	WSA III/4: 227–30	Easter morning
Sermon 120	PL 38: 676–78	WSA III/4: 231–33	Easter morning
Sermon 121	SC 116: 222–32	WSA III/4: 234–37	Easter morning
Sermon 225	PL 38: 1095–98	WSA III/6: 247–51	Easter morning
Sermon 226	PL 38: 1098–99	WSA III/6: 252–53	Easter morning
Sermon 228	PL 38: 1101–02	WSA III/6: 257–59	Easter morning
2. Eucharistic Catecheses: to the neophytes (and faithful)			
Sermon 227	SC 116: 234–43	WSA III/6: 254–56	Easter morning
Sermon 228B = s. Denis 3	MA 1: 18–20	WSA III/6: 261–64	Easter morning
Sermon 229 = s. Denis 6	MA 1: 29–32	WSA III/6: 265–68	Easter morning
Sermon 229A = s. Guelf. 7	MA 1: 462–64	WSA III/6: 269–72	Easter morning
Sermon 272	PL 38: 1246–48	WSA III/7: 300–1	Easter morning or Pentecost
3. Easter Week Sermons: to the whole assembly			
Sermon 146	PL 38: 796–97	WSA III/4: 445–47	Saturday of Easter Week
Sermon 229E = s. Guelf. 9	MA 1: 466–71	WSA III/6: 280–84	Monday of Easter Week
Sermon 229M = s. Guelf. 15	MA 1: 488–91	WSA III/6: 315–19	Friday of Easter Week
Sermon 229P = s. Lambot 3	RB 49 (1937): 252–56	WSA III/6: 327–30	Saturday of Easter Week
Sermon 233	PL 38: 1112–15	WSA III/7: 32–35	Monday of Easter Week
Sermon 245	PL 38: 1151–53	WSA III/7: 100–2	Wednesday of Easter Week
Sermon 249	PL 38: 1161–63	WSA III/7: 116–19	Friday of Easter Week

Chart 14—Cont'd
Sermons Mentioning Neophytes

Sermon	Text	Translation	Day
Tractates on 1 John 1	SC 75: 112–46	WSA III/14: 21–36	Easter Sunday evening
Tractates on 1 John 2	SC 75: 150–80	WSA III/14: 37–51	Monday of Easter Week
Tractates on 1 John 3	SC 75: 18—212	WSA III/14: 52–63	Tuesday of Easter Week
Tractates on 1 John 6	SC 75: 276–310	WSA III/14: 87–103	Saturday of Easter Week
4. Final Exhortation: to the neophytes			
Sermon 223	PL 38: 1092–93	WSA III/6: 209–11	Octave Sunday
Sermon 224	RB 79 (1969): 200–5	WSA III/6: 242–46	Octave Sunday
Sermon 255A = *s. Mai 92*	MA 1: 332–33	WSA III/7: 165–66	Octave Sunday
Sermon 260	PL 38: 1201–2	WSA III/7: 185–86	Octave Sunday
Sermon 260A = *s. Denis 8*	MA 1: 35–38	WSA III/7: 187–91	Octave Sunday
Sermon 260B = *s. Mai 89*	MA 1: 330–32	WSA III/7: 192–93	Octave Sunday
Sermon 260C = *s. Mai 94*	MA 1: 333–39	WSA III/7: 194–201	Octave Sunday
Sermon 260D = *s. Guelf.* 18	MA 1: 499–501	WSA III/7: 202–5	Octave Sunday
Sermon 353	PL 39: 1560–63	WSA III/10: 152–55	Octave Sunday
Sermon 376A	PL 39: 1669–71	WSA III/10: 348–50	Octave Sunday
5. Octave Liturgy: to the whole assembly			
Sermon 258	SC 116: 344–50	WSA III/7: 174–76	Octave Sunday
Sermon 259	PL 38: 1196–1201	WSA III/7: 177–84	Octave Sunday

Chart 15

Augustine's "Breaking Bread" Image of Initiation

Steps in baking bread as cited in s. Denis 6	Sermon 227	Sermon 229 = s. Denis 6	Sermon 229A = s. Guelf. 7	Sermon 272
1. Germinated in field, nurtured by rain, ripened	—	—	—	—
2. Threshed by oxen and brought to granary	—	threshed by heralds of Gospel (evangelization)	—	—
3. Set aside under observation in granary	—	catechumenate	—	—
4. Grinding	—	—	fasts, observances, vigils, exorcisms	—
5. Milled	fasts, sacrament of exorcism	fasts, exorcisms	exorcism	exorcism
6. Wetted into dough	baptism	baptism	baptism	baptism
7. Baked by fire	chrism of Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	temptations	Holy Spirit

CHAPTER 8

Peroration

At the outset I spoke of this investigation as an exercise in *ressourcement*, a "return to the sources." So now the question: what, if anything, of Augustine's practices and reflections might be gleaned and adapted for use by contemporary teachers and churches? This question of Augustine's relevance needs to be approached with profound care, given the distance and difference between his world and ours. In the introduction I also cited Jaroslav Pelikan's apt description of the Christian tradition as the "living faith of the dead" and of *ressourcement* as a process of including "the dead within the circle of our conversion." *Ressourcement* certainly requires that one do the difficult essentials of the craft of history, that one be a skilled gatherer of sometimes-hard-to-decipher evidence and a reconstructor of long-forgotten persons and events, that one not only know how to read foreign languages but also how to enter into often foreign, remote worlds and worldviews with some measure of sympathy. Historians are, by training, specialists in the art of conversing with the dead. But *ressourcement* requires something further. These journeys of retrieval require bringing the past into a close—and at times risky—proximity to a present that can prefer forgetting and talking only to itself. *Ressourcement* requires a sort of shuttle diplomacy between past and present that renders the past both present and proximate, with the concomitant risk of letting its humanity and its exotic otherness cast a light on our own milieu. The goal of *ressourcement* is this: that by including the dead within the circle of our conversation we might not forget a hard-won wisdom and, at the same time, might gain from their guidance the

ability to ask new questions and to explore new courses that may indeed serve the task of living faith.

What I hope has emerged from the preceding chapters is a portrait—or, more precisely, a set of vignettes or tableaux—of Augustine's catechumenate. Like any historical portrait, it can be looked at in and of itself. But as Pelikan has suggested, images from the Christian tradition can also serve iconically.[1] What might this mean? Icons are images that one does not simply look at. They are images that one looks through, as one looks through a window. They help fix our gaze on mysteries that lie beyond any particular historical image: that is, the mystery that God is, the mystery that the church is, the mystery that we ourselves are. But an icon is not only a window; it is also an image that helps us look back at ourselves, as one might look into a mirror. Its very otherness, its strangeness, casts a reflection. In this sense Augustine's catechumenate as icon might help us see ourselves more clearly. In its reflection the contours and limits of our own teaching on the mysteries—that God is, that the church is, that we ourselves are—might come into better focus. In this closing set of reflections I want to use Augustine's catechumenate as both a window and a mirror and suggest some ways in which his example may prove helpful or at least suggestive.

Before beginning, I must note several limits. First, rustling beneath these reflections on Augustine and the catechumenate one will detect a web of educational, epistemological, and theological issues at play. To name but a few: What constitutes knowledge—particularly of faith and about faith? What forms of knowing—cognitive, affective, verbal, practical—most need to be promoted and in what ways? What does teaching mean—especially when it involves teaching mysteries? What roles do Scripture, dogma, liturgy, and theology play within the catechetical enterprise? What is the relationship between intentional formation and grace? What is the relationship between tradition and transformation? These questions need to be explored more systematically as they apply to

[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 54–57.

the catechumenate. In these few pages I can do no more than touch upon them.

The following meditations on Augustine and the contemporary catechumenate are attempts to look, as it were, through a glass darkly—to speak more of possibilities than of actualities. That alone makes these reflections tentative. What is more, the catechumenate remains an enterprise "unbegun," to use Aidan Kavanagh's term. To speak systematically about what Augustine might contribute to this larger enterprise would at this juncture be risky. Augustine is hardly the only ancient voice that needs to be included in this larger conversation on the catechumenate and catechesis. Others who made passing appearances in the preceding pages—Tertullian, Origen, the Cappadocians, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Quodvultdeus—deserve to come center stage and receive equal hearing. Their works invite investigations of equal length and detail.

THE SPOKEN WORD: RHETORIC

In large measure, rhetoric shaped the "how" of Augustine's catechesis. He knew its perils quite well: that it was in itself a neutral art, that it could be pressed into service either for urging evil or for promoting justice. Still, he regretted that catechists of his day were ignorant of the art, and he pleaded that they take it up as an instrument for the service of the Gospel. Augustine's complaint rings even truer today. Rhetoric has become a lost art. It appears today, if it appears at all, under the guise of written composition and has been shorn almost entirely of its original oral character. While one certainly finds some accomplished rhetoricians today, both in the church and in the political sphere, their artistry has been, in large measure, self-taught and won through an intuitive grasp of basic rhetorical strategies. Rarely now is rhetoric a self-conscious discipline. Rarely is it the object of systematic study. Certainly it is no longer a prerequisite in the formation of catechists. This study has illustrated, I believe, the power of catechesis in the hands of an accomplished rhetorician. Some of Augustine's rhetoric—orchestrated according to a fifth-century aesthetic and tuned to turns of phrase possible only in Latin—is out-of-date. But Augustine does

offer us some strategies, some principles, and some perspectives for a catechesis honed by rhetoric. These touch, for the most part, on a limited but vital area of catechesis: the catechist's own words.

CATECHESIS AS A PERFORMING ART

Catechesis is an art, or more precisely, a performing art. It was no accident that Augustine compared his efforts to the theaters he so often denounced. His catechesis was a theater of the Word. Its drama was salvation history, its script was the Scriptures, and its actors included everyone. He recognized some risks: that he might execute his artistry as though it were a one-man play rather than an epic drama in which he served as soloist singing amid a larger chorus; that his people might well prefer cheering to changing, nodding assent to moral living. Thus he insisted that the measure of artistry depended on God's good grace and expressed itself in people who enfleshed the faith, embodied its charity, and enacted its justice.

Augustine tended to underestimate how vital his rhetorical training had been. We cannot. Catechists, like other performing artists—musicians, dancers, actors, athletes—need to undergo an exacting discipline. That means, in part, practice, practice, practice. One need only reflect how many times a gymnast might rehearse a dismount from the high bar, how many times a pianist might go over a Mozart cadenza, how many times an actor might recite a Shakespearean soliloquy. With practice, the difficult can become effortless. Even so, the art of catechesis—like the art of jazz or of stand-up comedy—includes improvisation. And, ironically, such improvisational skills themselves come from practice, from having within one's repertoire a host of standard turns and ornaments.

Catechesis, like other performing arts, has a fragile beauty whose artistry is tied to one-time performances. Performing artists necessarily wield their craft at specific times, in specific locales, before specific audiences. That means that the beauty of catechesis, as with other performing arts, flowers in the fleeting heat of live performance. Because of this, history—at least before the advent of recordings, films, and videos—has tended to remember its dramatists, not its actors; its composers, not its musicians; its theologians,

not its catechists. By its very nature, catechesis is an art etched in the ephemeral. It is precisely this fragile beauty that Possidius alluded to when he regretted that his readers had missed the better part if they had not seen or heard Augustine preach. It is precisely this fragile beauty that Augustine himself acknowledged when he alerted Deogratias to the difference between writing with a future reader in view and speaking to a flesh-and-blood inquirer. The written word can only dimly capture the living voice. Utterly lost are the cadence of speech and intonation of voice, the pauses and gestures, the choreography of body and word. For this reason one learns catechesis as one learns other performing arts: from living masters. It is no accident that Augustine offered Deogratias an apprenticeship. It is also no accident that Augustine belittled the ancient obsession with rule books, that he insisted, as Cicero had, that orators needed raw talent, much practice, and good models, and that great orators fulfilled rules because they were eloquent; they did not apply them that they might be so.

Augustine's example suggests that the oral character of catechesis has a complexity and rigor all its own and that this be respected in the formation of catechists. It also suggests that while catechists need a thorough grounding in scholarship—lest their artful performances rely on ill-founded or ill-digested ideas—their use of that scholarship necessarily orients itself according to the demands of an oral medium. Consider musicians: the studied phrasing of a musicologist writing in a scholarly journal differs from the studied phrasing of a classical guitarist performing before a live audience. Both demand scholarly expertise, but their respective expressions of that expertise differ. For the catechist, as for such classical musicians, erudition is less visible, its expression more spontaneous, its effect more immediate. Yet for the performing catechist, as for the full-time scholar, the search for truth remains an abiding, passionate concern.

THE WELL-TEMPERED WORD

In recent years religious educators have recovered storytelling as a catechetical medium. Not surprisingly, some have made it a stock item in the repertoire of RCIA catechesis. Augustine used other

tools: metaphors, epigrams, antitheses, puns, paradoxes, parallelisms, jingling rhymes—to name only a few. Such rhetorical figures were part of the orator's stock in trade. Certainly such figures sometimes find their way into the words we use when teaching, but rarely in the concentration and rarely with the artistic self-consciousness that Augustine and his contemporaries brought to their own performances. Such figures are but the flickering surface of a deeper sensibility and sensitivity: a care for the well-tempered word. Catechists today are more liable to worry about *what* they are going to say than *how* they are going to say it. The focus lies more on clarity of thought than on crispness of expression. Augustine too sought clarity, not cultivation. But for him clarity meant making his message memorable. Clarity meant forging images that would flash in the mind long after the fire of live performance had passed. Clarity meant crafting ear-catching phrases that would echo in the memory long after the actual sounds had left his lips and lapsed into silence.

Augustine offers, I believe, some helpful devices. Some of his favorites can be executed in English only with difficulty. His long rhyming passages presume Latin's flexible word order and consistent ways of conjugating verbs and declining nouns. But other Augustinian devices might be more easily imitated. Let me retrace three—the epigram, the antithesis, and the metaphor—and suggest not only their pedagogical import but also their theological significance. I mean only to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Other Augustinian devices—the knotty problem, the parallelism, the soliloquy—could prove equally valuable and deserve exploration.

(1) The Epigram. Augustine's sermons on the Eucharist offer a number of examples. He gave his hearers an easy-to-remember definition of sacraments: "in them one thing is seen, something else understood" (*in eis, aliud videtur, aliud intelligitur*). He used an epigram to stress the link between liturgy and life: "together we drink because together we live" (*simul bibimus, quia simul vivimus*). Finally, he used an epigram to turn his two-edged theology of Eucharist into an exhortation: "Be what you see, and receive what you are" (*Estote quod videtis, et accipite quod estis*).

These examples suggest that epigrams help both to summarize and to exhort. As an intellectual tool the epigram can concentrate a chain of reasoning, making its subtleties manageable and its insights memorable. As an exhortative device it can make moral consequences clear and the moral task urgent. Obviously, teaching with epigrams has risks. It can substitute the hard-nosed task of theological thinking for a soft-minded merchandising of theological slogans. But the epigram remains one tool (among others) for lessening the intellectual fissure between ordinary believers and the educated elite, a problem that plagues the contemporary church as least as much as it did Augustine's. And it remains one tool (among others) for highlighting that theology has consequences and that mysteries have imperatives.

(2) The Antithesis. Dual figures dot the Augustinian landscape: the church as wheat and chaff; Christ as Head and Body; the Gospel as the love of God and the love of neighbor; history as the tale of two cities. Such dual figuration shaped even the minute turns of his thought: he thought of himself as the "servant, not the master of the house"; he called the *competentes* to "fast from hatred and feast on love"; he denounced Christians who "praise God with the tongue and blaspheme him with their lives." Augustine's oratory is, in large measure, the art of the antithesis. It is an art full of promise and of peril. Its promise lies in the way it can catch the clash of light and dark in the human heart and in human history. Its peril lies in its overbold contrasts that can sever church from world, spirit from flesh, divine life from human life. Augustine's work is reminiscent of those master photographers who prefer shooting in black and white. If they underexpose a photo, things appear too dark. If they overexpose it, things appear too bright. But when they balance light and dark with a discerning eye, they capture the world's subtle shades of gray.

Antithesis is, to a large degree, the native language of baptism and of baptismal catechesis. After all, candidates are called to strip off the old and put on the new; to prefer the folly of the cross to the wisdom of the world; to die to sin and be reborn to grace. More important, antithesis is the native language of Christian faith itself.

As the Council of Chalcedon formulated it, we are to confess faith in "our Lord Jesus Christ, the same, perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same, truly God and truly human . . . the same, one in being with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity." If orthodoxy itself balances antitheses, then how much more do catechists today need to make such balancing part of their own language. In the end this art of antithesis is like the art of tightrope walking. One in a sense falls off in both directions at the same time and so keeps one's balance. The effect can be breathtaking.

(3) The Metaphor. Augustine's catecheses teemed with images from the life around him: from seafaring, agriculture, jurisprudence, commerce, athletics, warfare. He rarely used these images in simple ways. Sometimes they served to highlight often unexpected continuities between the ways of culture and nature and the ways of God and church: for example, the Lord's Prayer as a bilge pump; the creed as a pact between pearl merchants. Sometimes they served to stress discontinuities so that the ways of culture and nature appeared as a photographic negative of the ways of God and church: for example, in ordinary households the father is greater than the son, whereas in God's household Father and Son are equal; in ordinary law courts judge and lawyer are different so that the trial is impartial, whereas in God's law court judge and lawyer are the same so that the judgment is rigged in our favor. Sometimes, Augustine crafted extended metaphors (or if biblically based, typologies and allegories) so that an image cluster became a map: for example, initiation as baking bread; the church as the inn of the Samaritan; Christian life as an exodus out of Egypt and into the desert. Sometimes Augustine turned images inside out so that a well-worn theme became astonishing once more: for example, Christ the doctor whose scars healed wounds; Christ the import merchant who swapped our death-bound flesh for his death-defying spirit.

This style of teaching keeps one's message close to the audience's experience. It can give the message a poignant and, on occasion, threatening proximity to everyday life. With images one

can, in a single stroke, elide a cluster of meanings, sentiments, and attitudes into an imaginative whole. If used frequently and over time, images mount up so that a cumulative religious vision begins to form. The images thus undergird and support the cross-weave of the everyday and the religious so that the religious becomes incarnated into the everyday and the everyday becomes imbued with religious overtones. At the same time, images mark off and hold the rightful tension between faith and culture, church and world, divine logic and human logic. This style of teaching, both as a pedagogical method and in its pedagogical outcomes, meshes naturally with a faith that dares to make the paradox of incarnation its doctrinal centerpiece.

While teaching by image has much potential, it also has hazards. Images rarely mean one thing or elicit a single association—something poets both recognize and exploit. Images have great power, but they also have a life of their own. They often mean more than we want them to mean, precisely because they are drawn from the thicket of everyday life. Images can twist and turn in one's hands and, if mishandled, have a bite that can poison one's best intentions. Thus one must know when to pick them up and when to drop them.

THE ART OF PERSUASION

Augustine felt that what Cicero had said of any orator applied equally to the Christian: that the one who is eloquent teaches, delights, and motivates, and that the greatest of these is motivating. The art of rhetoric is the art of persuasion. And persuasion means convincing people's minds, stirring their hearts, and leading them to action. Augustine recognized that these aims, when transposed into a Christian setting, assumed definite contours. Certainly teaching—bringing people to understand the Christian message—remained a vital concern. He took great pains to introduce people to the best theology he knew and to do so using the best methods at his disposal. He also took special care for those who walked a little more slowly, and he would not move on until he had heard their shouts of understanding. Delighting, too, had its place. At one level he knew that he had to entertain, if only so

that his hearers might be retained as hearers. At a deeper level he recognized that delighting meant forming hearts. Thus he made it his first concern to read his hearers' hearts and to let them read his. He also sought to sweep them up so that they would taste the full spectrum of religious emotions: awe, fear, joy, sorrow, zeal, yearning. Still, motivating remained his ultimate measure. It, of course, meant setting out the Christian wisdom and way of life. It also meant moving people so that they would do what they knew should be done. Thus for Augustine the measure of catechesis was persuasion. And persuasion meant informing minds, forming hearts, and transforming lives. It meant, in a word, conversion.

These three aims—teaching, delighting, motivating—are not the usual way catechists today frame their task. Certainly there are some who not only teach but delight, who not only instruct but persuade. But the more common category of self-reflection remains "teaching," and often enough "teaching" in the narrow sense: instructing. This comes in part from force of habit. As Americans we spend many years in schools, and schools often define educational success in terms of cognitive knowledge and cognitive skills. Those of us who are Catholics come as heirs to a religious education that has too often equated faith with assent to propositions. Rustling beneath this emphasis on instructing and cognition are certain Enlightenment presuppositions: for example, that true knowing comes only from the exercise of critical and dispassionate reasoning.

The contemporary preoccupation with cognition, with topics to be covered and knowledge to be gained, misses tasks Augustine thought equally important: delighting and motivating. Certainly it is essential to give contemporary candidates the best theology has to offer. But it is not enough. Certainly it is essential to use the methods that best promote cognitive understanding. But it is not enough. What a content-and-method mind-set tends to miss is the profoundly human dynamic of catechesis. Catechesis is not just something said about the topic at hand. It is something said between people: catechist to candidates, candidates to catechist. And in this exchange, as Augustine observed, a natural sympathy tends to spring up so that supposedly clear lines between teacher and

learner blur. Catechesis is thus more than subject matter, more than learning techniques. It is an activity rooted in a human relationship. Augustine sensed this. He thought it natural to compare the experience of evangelical catechesis to the experience of one friend giving another a tour through the countryside, an expanse well-known to the one, novel to the other, and enriching to both.

It is from the deeply human dynamic of catechesis that care for delight and for persuasion takes—or should take—its moorings. (I say "should take" because any talk of delighting, motivating, and persuading inevitably raises an ominous specter: turning catechesis into ploys, playacting, and the hard sell. I shall touch on this in a moment.) Augustine's example suggests that we need to give delighting and persuading the same care now lavished on instructing. This would mean recognizing that the affective dynamic of catechesis has a complexity all its own. It was a complexity to which Augustine and his contemporaries gave careful attention. They had a knack for sizing up, at a glance, the unique chemistry of a group, and they learned to attune their words to the ebb and flow of their hearers' moods. They incorporated this sense into their catechesis precisely because they were concerned with forming hearts and transforming lives. Such a fine-tuned sensitivity cannot easily be analyzed, dissected, or categorized. But it can be learned and it can be given its due.

Equally critical is the mood of the catechist. Augustine's exchange with Deogratias makes this clear. When Deogratias asked advice on method, Augustine obliged, but he insisted that the heart of the matter lay less in method and more in the affections of the catechist. Augustine pointed out that the catechist needs—and the Gospel deserves—*hilaritas*: delight, enthusiasm, passion. The dour catechist is a poor spokesperson for the awe-inspiring mercy and love of God. What Augustine recognized—and what we, at times, overlook—is that no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the Christian message and the Christian who bears that message. Inevitably, the bearing of the messenger affects the bearing of the message. A listless messenger tends to make the message listless, while an inspired messenger tends to make the message inspiring. This is scarcely to reduce catechesis to emotionalist outbursts.

Augustine could hardly be invoked as an example of mere emotionalism. He brought to the art of catechesis the full resources of a critical reason nurtured according to the philosophic tools of his age. But he also brought along the full spectrum of his own emotions. Catechists today may choose to offer arguments very different from those of Augustine, but the need for passion, a passion for Christ and for the Gospel, remains no less a part of the task.

Nonetheless, neither eloquent words nor passionate speech persuade the way lives persuade. Augustine insisted—and it remains no less true today—that the life of the speaker has greater weight in persuading than the most eloquent speech. This truth testifies in a different way to the principle cited earlier: that no hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the Christian message and the Christian who bears the message. Christianity in our time, as in Augustine's, celebrates its martyrs. And the word "martyr," as Augustine used to remind his hearers, means "witness," for martyrs give testimony not so much by eloquent words as by eloquent deeds.[2] The reverse is no less true. Christians who live badly are eloquent dissuaders and lead people to protest now as they protested in Augustine's time: "Do you want me to be like so-and-so?"

Finally, catechists need to exercise caution and humility by admitting the limits of Christian persuasion. Consider Augustine the catechumen. He was deeply impressed by the eloquence of Ambrose's speech, and he was deeply impressed by the eloquence of Ambrose's life. Yet his conversion moved slowly, by fits and starts, and the formation he received as a catechumen was only one factor among many in his conversion. In the end, neither eloquent words nor eloquent lives have the final word. Grace does. As Augustine repeatedly insisted, the catechist, the outer teacher, matters far less than Christ, the inner teacher. Augustine once pleaded with a procrastinating catechumen named Firmus and reminded him—and us—of whose eloquence matters:

[2] *s.* 260E.1 (= *s. Guelf.* 19), given on the Octave; also *s.* 286.1, 299F.1 (= *s. Lambot* 9), 328.2, 335A.1 (= *s. Frangip.* 6).

> I [persuade] in one way; God in another;
>
> I on the outside; God on the inside; . . .
>
> I by speaking; God in an ineffable way;
>
> I only through his gift; God through his very self;
>
> I as a minister, who have this ministry from him; God as a crafter of ministers, who, though needing no minister, uses faithful ministers for this—that he may lavish the good of his workings even on them;
>
> finally: I as a human being who, most of the time, cannot persuade much; God as the one—when he so wills it—to whom the power of persuasion submits.[3]

THE DARK SIDE

Rhetoric grew up in a tough neighborhood: the ancient law courts. There, it developed a mean streak despite all its cultivated veneer. The ancient rhetor knew how to use words as weapons. He learned not only how to take apart an opponent's argument but also how to demean an opponent's character. The ancient rhetor thus learned strategies for conducting a smear campaign. This habit of mind appears in Augustine. He was, by training and temperament, a debater, not an ecumenist. Dismantling an opponent's case or scoring debating points sometimes mattered more than seeing things from an opponent's standpoint. And he had a knack for pitting "us" against "them," and, despite protests to the contrary, may have exacerbated civil tensions between Catholics and Donatists. These tendencies, it must be acknowledged, were no less present in his opponents, who could be equally vituperative and unbending. This strain within ancient rhetoric lived on and enjoyed a long career within Catholicism: in the campaigns against the Reformers, against the Enlightenment, against the Modernists. Vatican II moved consciously and decidedly against such polemics. It insisted that Catholics approach other religious communities in the spirit of dialogue, a dialogue aimed at mutual understanding.

[3] *ep.* 2* (BA 46B:74); trans. Eno, FOTC 81:28 (modified).

Vatican II's stance sets the tone for contemporary baptismal catechesis. This does not mean that catechists should cease marking out positions that distinguish the Catholic community from other communities. But it does mean acknowledging that other people and other faiths can possess a truth and a wisdom that only the Spirit can give.

The rhetorical tradition has a second dangerous drift within it. It can easily become self-absorbed, as it became in Augustine's time, and lapse into a frivolous aestheticism. Augustine worried about educated dilettantes more attuned to style than truth. The danger today lies elsewhere. A catechesis honed by rhetoric could easily follow the drift of popular art forms and descend into mere entertainment. It could reduce teaching to showmanship, theology to glitz, and the Gospel to what sells in prime time. In an era when thinking, whether political or religious, threatens to be reduced to sound bites, the insidiousness of this drift should not be underestimated. Given the contemporary milieu, it becomes even more imperative that catechists, whatever their rhetorical gifts, be well-informed, that they have at their fingertips the best that scholarship has to offer.

Finally, rhetoric must be seen for what it is: a technology of the word. Like any technology it can be used for good or for ill. Augustine noted (as Cicero had before him) that the combination of rhetoric's power and rhetoric's indifference made it a dangerous tool. More often than not, it was, is, and will be used for ill. In the last century politicians have used it for promoting wars and playing on ethnic hatreds and racial prejudice; advertisers have used its stratagems for purveying useless consumer goods and fueling a crass materialism. Our culture, like Augustine's, teems with rhetorically astute voices, and these voices, often enough, seek to persuade people to accept values that stand in stark contrast to the Gospel. Nonetheless, rhetoric can also serve the good. One need only look at the example of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose eloquence gave the moral truth, for which he gave his life, a force and a power it would not otherwise have had. King's career is itself eloquent testimony to the rightness of Augustine's insistence that eloquence, if rooted in wisdom, can in fact do much good.

THE VISIBLE WORD: LITURGY

Augustine thought of the liturgy as a sequence of "visible words." And it was within the visible words of liturgy that his spoken words, his catechesis, usually resided. The two—the visible words of liturgy and the spoken words of catechesis—intertwined. Each nurtured and shaped the other. On the one hand, Augustine's catechesis moved according to liturgical rhythms. His basilica was his classroom; his sermons were his lectures; the Scriptures proclaimed by readers and sung by cantor and congregation were his textbooks; his lessons drew on a repertoire of ritual gesture, movement, and word. On the other hand, Augustine used catechesis to rescue ritual from unthinking ritualism. With catechesis he drew out how liturgy held hidden theological meanings and glaring moral imperatives. In his catecheses he probed the liturgy for echoes of salvation history or reverberations from end-time. In his catecheses he traced out how the shape of a rite might shape the heart or how ritual mores might clash with cultural ones.

At no moment was this play of rite and catechesis more obvious or more concentrated than during the Triduum. During one thirty-six-hour period (from Holy Saturday to Easter Sunday evening) candidates moved through rite after rite: the solemn *redditio*; the lighting of Vigil lamps; the all-night round of readings and psalms; the baptismal immersions and anointings; the two Eucharists. And yet again and again this succession of rites was punctuated by catechesis of the highest order: by the public sermons during the Vigil and the morning Liturgy of the Word; by the private sermons on baptism and on Eucharist; by a Sunday evening sermon that inaugurated the special Easter Week sequence. The Triduum was the culmination of a long journey, and at that journey's end came initiation. That initiation was marked not simply by a sacramental crescendo but also by a catechetical one.

The ancient symbiosis between catechesis and liturgy no longer exists. The two have parted ways. Each has become a separate discipline; each has its expertise; each has its distinctive methods and concerns. This division of labor has yielded gains, but it has also meant certain losses. One of these is what Aidan Kavanagh termed the "de-ritualization of catechesis." No longer does catechesis

locate itself primarily within a liturgical ambience. No longer is catechesis knit primarily within the ritual rhythm of Scriptures proclaimed, psalms sung, prayers uttered. No longer do ministers see or use the sermon as the preeminent catechetical medium. The inverse, what I would term the "de-catechization of ritual," has also taken place. No longer is liturgical theology a genre of catechesis. No longer does it breathe the spontaneous orality that Augustine and his contemporaries brought to it. No longer does it address itself to audiences with little education and even less background. No longer does it use a language pruned of jargon and spiced with music and imagery.

In moving from the basilica to the classroom, catechesis has gained as well as lost. This move made it possible for the laity to once more serve in this vital ministry. It opened the way for catechumens to gather apart from the larger assembly so that they might receive a catechesis better attuned to their unique needs. It also opened the way for using a variety of educational methods. A classroom ambience allows informal dialogue, something virtually impossible within a liturgical setting. Moving from liturgy to classroom has sometimes meant little more than moving from a monological sermon to a monological lecture. However, accomplished catechists now use a spectrum of dialogical methods that allow candidates to give voice to the religious within their own experience, to tell their own history of salvation, and to grapple in their own words with biblical texts and doctrinal traditions.

Augustine himself did not always use a liturgically based catechesis. His evangelizing of inquirers often took place outside of liturgy, and his address to them was profoundly shaped by an opening, and sometimes ongoing, dialogue. During Easter Week he held special open sessions with neophytes and faithful, and in these, too, dialogue played an important part. No doubt other important, though informal, exchanges took place, but these are exactly the types of experiences rarely preserved in the historical record. We do know, thanks to the *Confessions*, that one such exchange figured prominently in Augustine's own conversion: his conversation with Simplicianus. In the course of this, Simplicianus recounted the story of Victorinus's conversion and, in so doing,

fired Augustine's enthusiasm and offered him a model to be imitated. Even Augustine's liturgical catecheses moved according to a dialogical rhythm. Again and again his hearers broke in and punctuated his words with outcries and applause—so much so that he used their noisy responses as a barometer of his pedagogical effectiveness.

It would be a mistake to treat Augustine's liturgically imbued catechesis—or that of his contemporaries—as though his or their efforts offered some norm for contemporary catechesis. Some of what he and they did may be desirable, but not feasible, and some of what he and they did may be feasible, but not desirable. Yet his and their examples, while by no means normative, may still prove suggestive. Let me cite several examples:

THE SERMON AS CATECHESIS

Augustine routinely preached for an hour. Perhaps more surprising: his hearers were liable to think themselves cheated if he shortened his remarks unduly. Obviously most Catholic congregations today have very different expectations and would revolt against such prolixity. Sermons may now be shorter. Nonetheless, they remain a form of catechesis. What may well be overlooked is a simple, obvious fact: catechumens still listen to sermons. So do the elect and so do neophytes. In fact, over the course of their formation, candidates may well hear more than a hundred Sunday sermons. Do preachers advert to this? Do they look out and see the catechumens or elect or neophytes mixed in with the larger assembly? Does the presence of such candidates in any way shape what preachers say or how they say it?

The example of Augustine may offer contemporary preachers helpful strategies. First, preachers inevitably address mixed audiences, a fact that Augustine and his contemporaries both recognized and exploited. When Augustine came upon a biblical text with baptismal overtones, he routinely turned to the catechumens and offered them a brief instruction or exhortation. Such turns, in effect, make the catechumens the hearers and the larger assembly the over-hearers. In this way, as Augustine noted, the catechumens are instructed and the faithful roused from forgetfulness.

A second strategy moves in the opposite direction: the preacher singles out the candidates but addresses his remarks not to them, but to the larger assembly. Augustine's Easter Sunday and Octave sermons illustrate the basic dynamic. He would have the assembly turn its gaze to the white-robed neophytes clustered in the *cancelli.* He then invested the gathered neophytes with symbolic force by linking them to classic scriptural phrases. In this way the neophytes became living icons that pointed to the high cost of conversion and the high dignity of baptism. This approach is one way that preachers might make the catechumenate a vehicle for renewing the whole local community. It may help the community come face-to-face with a simple but often overlooked principle: that the way one becomes a Christian is the way one remains a Christian—that is, by conversion—and that the journey of conversion is lifelong, communal, and required of all.

THE PEDAGOGY OF SILENCE

Augustine's neophytes emerged from the baptistery freshly washed, freshly anointed, and freshly clothed. They were then invited for the first time to join the assembled faithful for Eucharist. No one had explained the Eucharistic Prayer to them. No one had explained the kiss of peace to them. No one had even explained to them how to receive communion, let alone what it meant. Only later, at a second Eucharist, did Augustine offer any instruction.

This suggests that the first movement in liturgical catechesis is—or at least might be—a pedagogy of silence. This means that catechists recognize that silence can teach, that the rite itself teaches, and that the rite—and not catechists—should have the first word. Such silence presumes what cannot, unfortunately, be presumed: namely, that we use liturgical symbols and gestures that are generous enough and lavish enough to speak for themselves; that baptism be a real bath and not a few dribbles of water; that chrismation be a real anointing, applied thickly enough for its fragrance to be sensed; and that our eucharistic bread look, feel, and taste like real bread.

The pedagogy of silence is related to, but distinct from, the larger and thornier question of a *disciplina arcani*. When the RCIA

resurrected the rite of dismissing catechumens, it reinstituted something of the old *disciplina*. This rite of dismissal—and the whole tradition of the *disciplina arcani*—has been ignored by many, defended by some, and attacked by others. Those who object argue that it is a liturgical anachronism. Even worse, it is bad manners and smacks of spiritual elitism. Two of Augustine's contemporaries, Cyril and Ambrose, suggested that the *disciplina arcani* had a value beyond simply shielding the Christian mysteries from the uninitiated. They felt it had a pedagogical value all its own. Cyril, for instance, believed that in matters of mystery, experience should precede explanation; and Ambrose believed that the inner light of the mysteries infused itself better in the unsuspecting. Similar views may have governed Augustine's practice. In any case, he consciously chose not to explain the Eucharist until after the neophytes had first experienced it themselves.

One may choose to dismiss the *disciplina arcani*. Nonetheless, a pedagogy of silence may have a value all its own. It implies that catechists refrain from explaining the rites in advance, that they cease trying to preprogram candidates' experience. Because this moves against common practice, a simple analogy might prove helpful. We expect film critics to alert us whenever a worthy film comes along. We also expect them to pique our curiosity and to point out a few salient features from the upcoming film. But we hope they have the common decency not to tell us the ending, as if their review were a substitute for the actual experience of seeing the film. If critics know how to be circumspect about films, then how much more should catechists be circumspect about the church's rites. Certainly catechists need to alert candidates to a rite's worthiness, and the responsibilities that accompany its passage. Certainly catechists need to pique their curiosity and alert them to a few of the rite's salient meanings: that becoming a catechumen means committing oneself to following Christ; that baptism marks the forgiveness of sin; that the Eucharist means real presence. But like film critics, catechists need to have the common decency not to tell everything—as if their preparatory catechesis were a substitute for sacramental experience. Good films have an immediate intelligibility to those who watch them. So too,

good rites have an immediate intelligibility to those who participate in them. And if good films have a richness and meaning that provoke discussion among appreciative viewers, then how much more do the Christian mysteries have a richness and meaning that naturally provoke later meditative reflections among appreciative participants.

A pedagogy of silence flows from a respect for the candidates and for the mysteries. In practice it means that one not explain the rites in advance and that one certainly not hold rehearsals. All that is needed is to alert candidates to doctrinal essentials and to the high responsibilities and blessings that will come on the far side of the rite. Usually, one may need to quell anxieties. To do so, one simply has to reassure candidates that they will not be embarrassed, that a master of ceremonies will make sure that they are in the right place at the right time, and that they need only to listen for and answer the simple questions asked them. As for the rest, the mysteries can speak for themselves.

THE SHAPE OF MYSTAGOGY

Mystagogy, the teaching of mystery, is itself a mystery to many. Patristic examples may provide guidance not only in restoring the term, but in restoring the art itself. As we saw, fourth- and fifth-century mystagogy braided into a single weave three distinct strands: (i) liturgical actions and words; (ii) scriptural images and themes; and (iii) analogies drawn from nature or culture. It assumed different contours in the hands of different mystagogues. Cyril, Theodore, and Ambrose used their respective baptismal and eucharistic liturgies as their outline but differed from one another in emphasis, with Cyril stressing how the liturgical present imaged the scriptural past, Theodore emphasizing how the liturgical present foreshadowed an eschatological future, and Ambrose stressing how visible rites pointed to invisible realities. Chrysostom and Augustine, on the other hand, used the liturgy less systematically. For them liturgical symbols and gestures served as springboards for theological exploration or, more often, moral exhortation. The difference between these two lay less in intent and more in framework: Chrysostom drew especially on figures from

the scriptural past that they might serve as moral *exempla*; Augustine drew on scriptural figurations of the future so that his moral *dicta* might be tuned to the key of end-time.

The art of mystagogy begins with two presuppositions. First, candidates need to understand. They need to know what the liturgies mean and how liturgical symbols form them for Christian life. As Augustine insisted, human beings must not act like parrots, ravens, or magpies who mimic things they cannot understand. People have minds, and with their minds they are to pierce through sacramental emblems to glimpse their inner meanings. This has its dangers. Explaining rites can easily lapse into explaining them away. Inner meanings can be stressed so that outer symbols become mere husks. To put it in Augustinian terms: just as human beings have a spirit that enlivens their flesh, so sacraments have a meaning that enlivens their flesh; and just as one kills a human being by trying to extract the spirit from the flesh, so one can kill a sacrament by trying to extract its meaning from its flesh. In effect, a wrong-headed approach to teaching sacraments violates the second presupposition: namely, that sacramental mysteries are, in fact, mysteries and need to be treated as such. Mystagogical catechesis is thus less an explanation and more an exploration; it is less an explication and more an evocation. It works like sonar: it plumbs the depths not to deny the depths, but rather to point out how deep they actually are. It works like diving gear: it allows one to breathe in depths otherwise inaccessible and to swim down and surface buried treasures otherwise overlooked. In other words, the mysteries should appear, on the far side of catechesis, not less mysterious but more.

In practice, the art of mystagogy is a good deal simpler than one might think. One way is to begin with a liturgical symbol: for instance, the baptismal water. One then free-associates to gather scriptural stories: the waters of creation, Noah's ark, the Red Sea, Christ walking on the water, the woman at the well, etc. One then repeats the same process but focuses on how water appears in natural settings: spring rains, snow on mountains, salmon leaping upstream, dolphins swimming in the ocean, etc. One then repeats this a third time, focusing on water experiences in the local culture:

turning on tap water, taking a shower, nearly drowning in a lake, polluting a stream with chemicals, etc. In this way one assembles a reservoir of biblical, natural, and cultural images. One then probes each in terms of baptism so that it appears as either a type or an antitype. For example: "Christ bathes us in baptism's pure waters, not in some polluted stream, for he desires from us not polluted lives, but pure ones"; "just as salmon struggle up mountain streams to return to their birthplace, so too Christians struggle up a baptismal stream to their birthplace in Christ"; "both dolphins and Christians swim in depths over their heads, dolphins in the depths of an ocean, Christians in the depths of God's love."

A more difficult approach is to weave a mystagogical strand around liturgical words. Take, for instance, the words: "The Lord be with you / And with your spirit." First, one ponders their resonances: they are both a greeting and a blessing. Then one free-associates to give these ideas some concreteness: e.g., one greets people at the door of one's house; one blesses food at one's table. Then one assembles biblical episodes and themes to set this within the light of faith. Thus, one might say:

> With the words "The Lord be you / And with your spirit," we greet one another. Yet we not only greet one another; we also bless one another. Why do we greet one another? Because God has greeted us first, just as Christ once greeted the frightened apostles in the upper room. Why do we greet one another? Because Christ the homeless one has welcomed us into his home. Why do we bless one another? Because God has blessed us first, just as Christ blessed all those he healed. Why do we bless one another? Because God has blessed us with this feast, this Eucharist.

One then sees if this liturgical pattern might evoke a cultural one: e.g., homeless people have no door to be greeted at nor regular meals to bless. One can thus turn this liturgical exploration into a moral admonition:

> We greet one another and bless one another at the liturgy, but the homeless sit in the streets ungreeted and unblessed. Should we only greet them and bless them with words? No. We need to greet them

with emergency aid. We need to bless them by pressing their just cause. In that way, they too may have houses where they may greet friends. In that way, they too may have food that they may bless. We Christians are greeters and blessers in worship because, before all else, we are greeters and blessers in our lives—particularly to those who might otherwise know neither greeting nor blessing.

Mystagogical thinking is not difficult; it is simply different. It obviously can lapse into liturgical "alchemy" if not based on a knowledge of the structure, history, and theology of worship and sacrament. Yet mystagogy is an oral art and differs from a scholarly text on sacramental theology. Mystagogy moves by a logic more associative than discursive, more poetic than philosophical. This logic is not its only salient feature. There is another: a preference for surplus, whether a surplus of cultural images or scriptural echoes or both. The mystagogue tends to let these images and echoes pile up so that the meanings cluster and set off vibrations among themselves; the scholar, by contrast, tends to sort them out into discrete bits of meaning. Sorting out creates conceptual clarity; piling up evokes experience, an experience that presses the hearer beyond the words themselves. The mystagogue uses this method of surplus to achieve a conscious pedagogical aim: that while each image and each echo points to the mystery at hand, no one image or echo can subsume it. This method is thus a way of telling the truth about mystery: that a mystery can be pointed to, hinted at, even glimpsed, but it cannot be defined and it cannot be exhausted.

CATECHESIS AS LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Certain rites and symbols from the North African liturgy do not appear in the RCIA: catechumens no longer receive the sacrament of salt; the elect no longer go through a prebaptismal physical, nor do they stamp their feet on a goatskin-sackcloth; neophytes no longer wear their baptismal robes during Easter Week, nor do they walk about in special sandals. But other rites and symbols from the North African liturgy do appear in the RCIA: catechumens are once more signed with the cross on the forehead; Lent once more begins with an enrollment of names; the creed and the Lord's

Prayer are once again handed over; the elect are once more expected, in a solemn ceremony, to recite the creed from memory; the neophytes once again gather in a special "nest" set apart from the larger assembly. This second cluster of rites and symbols played prominent roles in Augustine's catecheses. The care and focus he gave these should alert us to features of the RCIA whose importance might be easily overlooked and whose symbolic potential might be left untapped.

Augustine took the details of liturgy seriously. He presumed that every gesture, every sign, every word mattered. Each held some import for how one believed, how one felt, and how one acted. It is for this reason that Augustine did not reserve catechesis on liturgy for neophytes and for Easter Week. He recognized that inquirers were signed with the cross, that catechumens joined in liturgies of the word, that *competentes* were exorcised and were handed over the traditions. All these rites and symbols needed—indeed, required—exploration. Thus a mystagogical strand threaded its way through the catecheses he gave at every stage of initiation.

This attitude and approach are not out-of-date. Catechesis has an ongoing role to play vis-à-vis the Rite's panoply of liturgies. Candidates now, as then, experience rites and symbols at every stage in their formation, and these need—indeed, require—exploration. For better or for worse, we catechists must serve as liturgical theologians. And we, like Augustine, do our liturgical ruminating catechetically, that is, orally, publicly. We use this public, oral medium because the symbolic reverberations within the liturgies of the catechumenate and of initiation are vital to the faith of candidates and of baptized alike. Catechesis and liturgy necessarily intertwine. As Augustine recognized, the two share a common language: the eloquence of the earth. They also share a common aim: a people transformed into the Body of Christ. It is this mystery—transformed people—that guides both rite and catechesis. Both hope to point to it. Both hope to evoke it. And both hope against hope that it may come about.

THE WRITTEN WORD: THE SCRIPTURES

What are we to teach? Just a few generations ago, the answer seemed obvious: teach inquirers about the "cathedral" of doctrine.

This cathedral, despite centuries of modification, retained the old Gothic outlines of the neoscholastic *summae*: *de trinitate, de incarnatione, de gratia, de sacramentis*. The task of catechists was, in a sense, to walk inquirers around this cathedral of doctrine, to explain each pillar and each niche, in hopes that they would understand and agree. Often enough, tours were conducted using a small handbook, the catechism. Before Vatican II this cathedral-tour approach was sometimes criticized, for instance by Josef Jungmann and the Kerygmatic Movement. Yet in the right hands and with the right person—say, a Thomas Merton or a Dorothy Day—it could aid a conversion of mind, heart, and life.

With Vatican II the old doctrinal architecture was altered radically. New guidebooks arose to replace the old, to reflect more accurately the radically refurbished interior and the radically reworked ground plan. Even so, many retained the old doctrinal focus, even the old Gothic outline: so much on Trinity, so much on incarnation, so much on grace, so much on sacraments. When the Rite first appeared it seemed only natural to use newer catechisms despite contrary indications within the Rite itself and despite sometimes impassioned protests from its commentators; others adopted the lectionary as *the* curriculum—ignoring the fact that the Consilium that created the Rite refrained from dictating a curriculum. In 1992, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* was promulgated, and in 2005 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published its *National Directory for Catechesis*. For Catholics these have shaped outlines, content, and, in certain ways, principles for the catechesis used within the catechumenate. To this current setting the example of Augustine offers both perspectives and challenges.

THE BREAD OF THE WORD

Augustine taught candidates the Scriptures. They received them in quantity and in depth. Augustine presumed that people need a certain biblical literacy, that they need to have a great many scriptural stories and a great many scriptural sayings at their fingertips, and that these stories and sayings need to infuse their minds, stir their hearts, and shape their way of life. He insisted on something that a catechism or theological-topics approach tends to lose sight

of: that God's Word is bread, that it feeds the hungry. Augustine's example suggests that a first priority is to give people the Scriptures themselves, in quantity and in depth, and that one not let second-level theological reflections, however brilliant and however necessary, be put forward as though they were substitutes for the Word itself. That perspective is not simply an ancient one. Vatican II put the matter pointedly when it quoted Augustine's contemporary, Jerome: "Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ."[4] Augustine insisted that the duty of Christian teachers and preachers is to break open this bread of the Word and to multiply its loaves. Catechists should think of themselves not as servants of theology or servants of the catechism but as servants of the Word. And as Augustine insisted, both they and those they guide live off the same scriptural diet.

BREAKING OPEN THE BREAD OF THE WORD

Breaking open the bread of the Word means interpreting. To do this, most of us tend to turn first to the fine biblical commentaries and tools produced by highly trained and knowledgeable exegetes. The work of these exegetes has radically altered our understanding of Scripture. They have alerted us to the Jewishness of Jesus, to the eschatological strains in his preaching, to the subtle elusive nature of his parables, to the intricate complexities of Jesus' social world. Biblical scholars have often sought to ferret out what lies behind the inherited text: earlier sources, oral traditions, editorial patterns, social settings. All this work, the fruit of the historical-critical method, orients itself to a quite deliberate end: to understand what Scripture (and the traditions behind it) *meant* in its (and their) original settings.[5] The biblical scholar as scholar also tries to set aside—as best

[4] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam prophetam*, quoted in Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* §25.

[5] Raymond E. Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 23–44. This touches on a vast domain; see John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); James G. Crossley, *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Steven L. McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible: History,*

an interpreter can—two other questions: what a scriptural text *has meant* in the tradition and what a scriptural text *means* now.

It was precisely these two questions—what Scripture *has meant* in the tradition and what Scripture *means* here and now—that preoccupied Augustine. His example suggests that we today cannot be content to repeat the findings of contemporary biblical scholarship, to teach only what Scripture *meant* in its original setting. Catechumens are not being initiated into the first-century community of Luke or of Matthew. They are being initiated into contemporary Christian communities. And that means, in part, finding ways to help initiates learn to read Scripture with contemporary Christian eyes. We saw that during one four-month period Augustine took catechumens (among others) through the opening chapters of John's Gospel. And Augustine explored at length what reading those chapters with catholic eyes entailed. He knew that his catholic reading differed from the reading given these chapters by others—Arians, Donatists, Neoplatonists. But his concern was not simply to mark out the catholic view. He treated these chapters at length because they grappled with questions that the orthodox tradition had wrestled with for centuries: Who is our God? What does it mean to call Christ the Word-made-flesh? What meaning does baptism have? What responsibilities come with it? What is creation and salvation? What difference does any of this make?

Augustine's example has something to say to those who use a lectionary approach. It suggests that exploring the Scriptures with catechumens is not the same as exploring the Scriptures with advanced students of the Bible. Exploring the Scriptures with catechumens requires helping them to read the Scriptures in the light, for example, of the Catholic tradition or the Episcopal tradition or the Lutheran tradition, for those are traditions into which they are being initiated. And those ecclesial traditions have expressed

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Prophecy, Literature—Why Modern Readers Need to Know the Difference and What It Means for Faith Today (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Steven L. McKenzie, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christopher Bryan, *Listening to the Bible: The Art of Faithful Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

themselves in many and varied ways: in art and music, in liturgy and popular piety, in the lives of saints and the spirituality of mystics, in the pronouncements of councils and the insights of great theologians. And such individual expressions inevitably take as their taproot one or another Scripture verse or theme. If catechumens are to be initiated, for example, into the Catholic tradition via the Scriptures, then they will need to grapple not only with the texts themselves but also with the rich and varied streams within the tradition that those texts touch upon. That includes, of course, handing on doctrine, the self-conscious, communal, and canonical understanding of the Catholic community. But it also implies, as Augustine demonstrated, that one teaches doctrine not as a free-floating set of abstractions but as a summary of beliefs and attitudes rooted in Scripture and as a lens for reading Scripture.

And yet there is another side to this: Augustine taught what it meant to read the Scriptures according to the rule of faith long before he actually taught the rule of faith. As we saw, the creed in no sense subsumed his initiatory curriculum, a fact that should challenge those who situate things around a catechism. The example of Augustine suggests that learning the creed—or learning a catechism—cannot substitute for or offer a shortcut around a long, meandering pilgrimage through the Scriptures. The creed offers a map for reading the biblical terrain. It is not, strictly speaking, the terrain itself. Its brevity marks out complex depths with a few words. And if those depths have not been explored, its few evocative signposts risk becoming overly abstract, if not altogether unintelligible. The creed is a symbol, neither more nor less. It is a catechetical heirloom passed from one generation to the next as a sign that the tradition itself has been passed from one generation to the next. Yet passing on the Christian tradition demands a good deal more than passing on the creed. In and of itself the creed is a summary of what the Christian tradition understands about crucial matters. But knowledge of summaries, while crucial, indeed imperative, is not the same as knowledge of the tradition. Knowing the tradition in an Augustinian sense means not only knowing in mind but loving in heart and loving in deed. As Augustine suggested, the creed is not just the words; it is a symbol of a covenant between merchants

who have committed their energies and their resources to a single-hearted quest for the pearl of great price, that is, charity.

But teaching what Scripture *has meant* through the tradition is not enough. Augustine's example suggests that catechists also need to teach what Scripture *means*: in a particular locale, at a particular moment, before a particular assembly. It is this point that no catechism can anticipate. Consider how Augustine taught. He sat in the apse of the basilica with an eye focused as much on his audience as on the text in his hand. And what he taught depended a great deal on who he taught and where he taught it. He was not, after all, teaching Scripture to candidates of all the Catholic communities in the empire; he was teaching Scripture to candidates of the catholic community in Hippo. So he often used the local milieu as a lens for reading the Scriptures. In his hands the Bible appeared outfitted in North African colors: the Spirit blowing like a wind out of the Sahara; the church appearing like a granary for sifting wheat and chaff; Christ sailing into town with precious goods like an import merchant. At other times Augustine used the Scriptures as a lens for reading the local milieu. He pitted Gospel teaching on the forgiveness of enemies against the local revenge ethic; he denounced the scandalous gap between rich landlords and the beggars in the streets. Augustine's example suggests that the catechist is a mediator: one who brings Scripture to culture and culture to Scripture. It also suggests that we may need to shift the burden of reflection: away from worldwide catechisms and national guidelines and toward local catechists, away from prepackaged curricula and toward on-site discernment. It suggests that proclaiming the Christian message means more than proclaiming timeless truths; it means proclaiming timely truths. And it is perhaps for that reason that class preparation needs to root itself as much in prayer as in any straightforward lesson planning and that the local catechist take care to come before God as a petitioner and listener before he or she comes before catechumens as a teacher.

THE MUSICALITY OF THE WORD

If one approaches Augustine with a programmatic eye, one leaves disappointed. He offers no neat lesson plans, no orderly

scope-and-sequence chart, no clear and distinct curricular architecture. Yet if one comes to him not with an eye for architecture but with an ear for music, patterns emerge. One detects a different order. His catecheses moved melodically, not structurally. Their flow was more fugal than linear. This musicality makes his work hard both to outline and to summarize.

Within a single sermon, often the only unifying thread might be the scriptural text at hand. Yet focusing on this alone misses what Augustine was doing: intricate variations on the Word of God. In a single variation—what might be printed in a modern text as a single paragraph—Augustine might quote the same verse three or four times, first setting it alongside verses from elsewhere in Scripture, from Paul or the Psalms, then setting it against an image from the local milieu, then teasing out its implications for Christology or ecclesiology or sacraments, then sounding out its emotional resonances or turning it into a quick series of exhortations. The excitement his hearers felt came not so much from an intellectual clarity, assembled piece by piece, but from the surprise of links suddenly forged or turns unexpectedly taken. And they were liable to leave not with a mental outline but with a string of insights, feelings, and imperatives knotted in tight-wrapped clusters.

This musicality touched not only Augustine's individual catecheses. It also shaped his approach to each of the periods or movements of Christian initiation. For him, each had its distinctive repertoire of melodies and moods. Evangelization meant a brief, energetic *ouverture*—setting out within a single kerygmatic address the vast sweep of salvation history. In the catechumenate, the Scriptures remained the focus, but the emphasis shifted from breadth to depth. As we saw, during one four-month period Augustine alternated between John's Gospel and the Psalms of Ascent, moving in a musical counterpoint between an education of mind and an education of heart. Lent brought to a crescendo the New Testament theme of conversion, of turning from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. Augustine here made his catechesis harmonious with a complex ritual and ascetical round that touched mind, heart, even body. And in passing on the Scripture-imbued creed and the scriptural Lord's Prayer he drew together earlier

strains into an easy-to-remember melodic core. During Easter the mysteries of baptism and Eucharist set the tone. Yet Augustine transposed these into an eschatological key, lest initiation be mistaken for mere socializing into a wheat-and-chaff church instead of a prelude to the resurrection of the flesh and the coming kingdom.

Augustine's musical ordering moves against the grain of contemporary catechesis. Catechists are more accustomed to packaging theology in discrete topics. Augustine's approach suggests an alternative: that individual sessions need not have a single intellectual thread or a single coherent argument; that faith can be also passed on via small, tight-wrapped clusters of insights, feelings, and imperatives. Augustine's example suggests that it may be less important to cover the theology of church as a unified body of theological reflection and more important to probe each ecclesiological insight for its links with Trinity or spirituality or ethical action. This approach springs from a respect for the structure of oral memory. More important, such an approach presumes that Christianity is not an intellectual system but a way of life, and one does not acquire a way of life by beginning first with some long, systematic intellectual reflection on it and then following it up with some long, systematic effort at doing it. One acquires a way of life in a more piecemeal fashion: by a flash of insight here or there, by picking up a feel for this part or that part, by imitating this expert or that virtuoso.

The example of Augustine suggests that catechists attune themselves and their message to the unique moods and aims of each of the four movements: that an evangelical *ouverture* is not the same as a catechumenal *andante* or a Lenten *grave* or a mystagogical *vivace*. He clearly challenges any who would turn a period of the Rite into a unit in which candidates cover material so as to graduate to the next unit. He suggests that catechesis moves more by circling around a common source—the Scriptures—but in varied ways, with varied moods, and for varied ends. This does not imply that one needs to abandon a fine-crafted curricular architecture for Augustinian musicality. On the contrary, a catechetical cathedral—like a cathedral of stone and stained glass—can be a splendid setting for music. Augustine's example in no way suggests that catechisms

need to be snatched from the hands of catechumens or of catechists. Rather, the question is how and why one uses a guidebook to any cathedral of doctrine. Augustine himself once authored such an *enchiridion*, or "handbook." Yet in sending it on, he advised: "It is not necessary that your hand be filled with a brief handbook but that your heart be set on fire with great love."[6]

THE WORD-MADE-FLESH: CHRIST

THE MELODY OF CHRIST

Classical composers have traditionally used a set form to hold together a lengthy composition. Typically they open the work by introducing a melodic core, or theme. As the work unfolds, this theme appears again and again, but rarely in its original form. It is transposed into a different key or moved from the treble line to the bass; or it might quicken to match a quickened tempo or be set in counterpoint to some contrasting theme. It can even disappear for a time through certain bridge passages. However, in the closing bars it returns, this time in its full-voiced sonority, set within and against a recapitulation of contrasting themes, so that the composition as a whole ends with a crescendo before the final cadence.

Augustine's baptismal catechesis followed a similar pattern. He, too, composed around a melodic core or theme: Christ. Augustine introduced the melody of Christ at the climax of his evangelical *ouverture*: proclaiming Christ as the breakthrough that marked the sixth age of world history, as the sign that human interiority had once more been made in the image and likeness of God. And Augustine framed this melody in a long series of paradoxes: Christ the hungering one who sated all hunger, Christ the thirsting one who quenched all thirst. This melodic core appeared again and again throughout his catecheses, though, in true musical fashion, transposed according to the demands of the moment: Christ was thus a plague doctor who made himself the medicine, a king who made himself the royal road, a jurist who will rig the case in our favor by serving as both lawyer and judge.

[6] *ench.* 1.6 (CCL 46: 51); trans. Harbert, WSA I/8: 275.

Augustine lifted this paradoxical melody from the prologue of John's Gospel. There, he believed, one finds the true two-edged identity of Christ; on the one hand, Christ the divine Word, and on the other, Christ the Word-made-flesh. So fond was Augustine of John's prologue that he quoted it more frequently than any other passage of Scripture—some 1,000 times in his surviving works.[7] In his four-month catechumenal sequence Augustine devoted no less than three full sermons to the Johannine prologue. Similar, though briefer, expositions appeared in other catecheses, especially those given on the creed and on Easter morning. What is striking from a pedagogical point of view is not so much the centrality Augustine gave this, or the detail in which he investigated it, or even the number of times in which it appeared; rather, it is the musical inventiveness he brought to it. He always seems to have had the ability to give this paradoxical melody some new turn or unexpected variation.

Augustine's method parallels the method of classical composers in other ways as well. Just as a composer might set contrasting themes in counterpoint with the main theme, so Augustine typically set other themes into play with Christology. For instance, he linked Christology to spirituality (Christ the inner teacher); to Trinity (Christ the eternal Word); to soteriology (Christ the ransomer of slaves, Christ the physician); to ecclesiology (Christ as Head, church as Body); to ethical exhortation (welcoming Christ the foreigner; catechumens wearing the cross on their foreheads in public). Just as classical composers, in drawing their work to a close, recapitulate earlier themes, so Augustine, between Easter and the Octave, recapitulated earlier themes: the church as wheat and chaff, baptism as passing through the Red Sea, care for the poor. Just as composers draw out the full-voiced sonority of their principal theme just before the cadence, so Augustine drew out the depth and intensity of his christological melody by setting his farewell words to the neophytes against the backdrop of Christ's resurrection and the resurrection in the end-time.

[7] Henri Marrou, *Saint Augustine and His Influence through the Ages*, trans. Patrick Hepburn-Scott (New York: Harper, 1957), 83.

Augustine's method was simpler to execute than it may seem from this overview. I do not think he consciously set about to create this rather complex musical rhythm. Rather, I suspect that he did no more than ask himself, at each juncture, one basic question: "How does such-and-such a point I am making relate to the mystery of Christ?" Because Augustine was attentive to the text at hand as well as to the liturgical season, this musical rhythm flowed rather naturally.

Augustine's christological method may prove helpful in avoiding certain pitfalls. A lectionary approach, for example, runs the risk of becoming just so many biblical readings that, while perhaps moving or engaging in and of themselves, have no inner cohesiveness or guiding thread. A catechism or topics approach faces a different pitfall: it can tend to relegate Christology to the status of one discipline among many others. Augustine's approach suggests that, amid the diversity of theological concerns, there is in fact a guiding thread, a linchpin: the person of Christ. It is Christ who stands as the point of entry into the mystery of creation and salvation, of human history and the human heart, of church and sacrament, and, of course, of God—or, as Augustine would put it, of "the Trinity who God is."[8]

Also instructive is Augustine's christological faith itself, its content, its vitality. As Brian Daley noted, Augustine tended to avoid technical language and "preferred to speak of the mystery of Christ in concrete, rhetorically challenging phrases that let the believer savor the inherent paradox of preaching an incarnate God."[9] Augustine's example suggests that one obviously take care to hand on—and explore in depth—the faith of the orthodox churches, what Augustine found expressed in Nicaea and Constantinople and what we find in Chalcedon. But, in doing so, one cannot be content with abstract propositions; initiates need to savor the bristling concrete paradoxes of Christ the Word-made-flesh.

[8] *trin.* 15.6.10, 15.17.28 (CCL 50A: 473, 502); author's translation.

[9] Daley, "A Humble Mediator," 101.

CHRIST AND CONVERSION

Theology in the contemporary world is multidisciplinary. It includes Trinity, ecclesiology, sacraments, eschatology, ethics, etc. For Augustine the melodic core that held together his catechesis on all these was Christ. In an analogous sense, conversion too is multidisciplinary. It touches one's interior, both mind and heart. It touches moral action, both personal charity and social justice. It touches one's relationship with church, both the local community and the larger communion of churches. It even touches one's body, for instance, sacramental acts in which one's body is signed, immersed, anointed, and fed; so too those hard-to-define, yet quite real, links and fissures that exist between our inner desires and bodily habits. For Augustine the cadence toward which conversion in all these areas moved was Christ. As he said to his catechumens and congregation: "Where do we go? To Christ. How do we go? Through Christ."[10] The journey of conversion is one in which Christ serves as both means and end, as both mediator and measure. In *City of God*, Augustine set out this theme more fully:

> Truth itself, God the Son of God, assumed humanity without ceasing to be God . . . so that humanity might have a way to humanity's God through the human God, that is, "the mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus" (1Tim 2:5). For it is as human he is the mediator and it is also as human he is the way. If there is an in-between [bridging] the one who is striving and the goal one is striving for, then one has hope of reaching the goal, but if there is none, or if the in-between is not known, what use is it to know the goal? So there is only one way that is assured against all wanderings: the One himself is at once God and human, the God to which one goes, the humanity by which one goes.[11]

Augustine did not collapse the many layers of conversion into a conversion to Christ of a narrow sort, that is, the me-and-Jesus conversion found among certain fundamentalists. He recognized that a conversion to Christ had profound interior, ecclesial,

[10] *en. Ps.* 123.2 (CSEL 95.3: 130); author's translation.
[11] *De ciuitate Dei* 11.2 (CCL 47: 322); author's translation.

sacramental, interpersonal, and social implications. And if one surveys Augustine's catecheses in terms of the ways he sought to evoke conversion, one can see that he addressed, at one time or another, every layer. He often touched several at once. For example, he touched on three—interior, interpersonal, and social—when he insisted that one pray the Lord's Prayer with two "wings": on the one hand, begging forgiveness from those one has hurt, and on the other, handing out alms to those in need.

Just as Augustine's baptismal formation neared its final cadence between Easter and the Octave, the profound links between Christology and conversion came to the fore. He begged his neophytes to focus on Christ who called them, who loved them, who sought them when they were lost, who enlightened them when they were found. At the same time, he set forth to his congregation how Christ the Word-made-flesh could be glimpsed in the flesh-and-blood neophytes who had, after the hard discipline of Lent, tasted grace's definitive favor. Yet Augustine never let this moment be treated as an end in itself. Rather, it was a sign—a flickering glimpse—of the final grandeur of history's Octave when human beings would no longer have to endure the quirky fissures that divided their minds from their hearts from their flesh, when human beings would no longer pine under oppressive social structures, when human beings would taste and feel and hear—in bodies utterly transfigured—what it means to be a human being fully alive, when human beings, at long last, would see and hear the mystery that neither eye has seen nor ear heard: the mystery that God is. Augustine thus made it quite clear that baptism—however dramatic—is only a foretaste, nothing more and certainly nothing less.

By using this eschatological frame Augustine downplayed, in a sense, the momentousness of adult baptism. We may not wish to. Today, for many congregations, the connection between baptism and conversion, between the high dignity of the one and the high cost of the other, has been obscured, in part by the practice of infant baptism. Nonetheless, Augustine's example suggests vigilance lest we tame the Rite and turn it into a finely calibrated instrument for socializing people into a wheat-and-chaff church. And he reminds us that it is God, not baptism, that is the end of the journey;

that it is the coming kingdom, not baptism, that will ultimately transfigure the world and humankind.

Augustine's vision of conversion had its darker strains. He worked from the traditional North African view that there could be no salvation outside the church, a view consciously overturned by Vatican II. Augustine could darken this North African perspective further in the way he portrayed human history as a somewhat desolate story of the saved few and the lost many. Another weakness from a contemporary perspective is the way he dealt with the larger social order. While he certainly exhorted candidates to help repair the unjust social order through almsgiving, he only rarely pushed this in the sharp prophetic manner of a Chrysostom, not to mention a contemporary liberation theologian. He tended to despair at the intractability of sinful social structures and to turn people's gaze away from life here and now to the life hereafter. Partly, he was too much of an enthusiast for the City of God. For Augustine, creation's grandeur seemed too pale, and life on earth seemed too often like an unduly protracted and painful pilgrimage, a walk more to be survived than celebrated.

On the other hand, Augustine grappled with an area of conversion utterly ignored in contemporary catechetical circles: the need to catechize the body. Augustine had insisted, against Porphyry and the Neoplatonists, that our faith praises the body precisely because of the resurrection of Christ. In practice, he praised the body little. Instead, he stressed the problems bodiliness brings on. Yet he insisted that the real culprit behind the body's self-destructive habits is the unruly human heart. During Lent, Augustine (and his contemporaries) insisted that the body too needs catechesis. And so he (and they) imaged Lent as a boot camp or Olympic training. Lent was a time to purge the poisons out of one's system, to root out slovenly habits, and to sober up with others who sought recovery from an addiction to the world. This way of thinking, however alien to contemporary catechesis, is routine in secular circles. The media regularly charts the widespread devastation that comes from addiction to alcohol, to drugs, to gambling, to sex. And addiction, for all its many layers and forms, has a bodily dimension. Asceticism need not be anti-body. We recognize that people should subject their

bodies to a discipline of diet and exercise to maintain fitness and health. It is this perspective that Augustine and his contemporaries worked from. They insisted that our bodiliness had profound spiritual consequences. It is an insight that we catechists need to reintegrate into our catechesis and our vision of conversion precisely because Christian faith is a faith in the fleshy incarnation and the fleshy resurrection of Christ. We may recommend very different disciplines from those Augustine used to help people come to grips with addictive or disordered habits, and we may celebrate more loudly than he the gift of the earth and the flesh. But Augustine does challenge us to let our catechesis reflect our faith, for our faith praises the body.

Conversion is, of necessity, many-layered, for human beings are themselves many-layered. The seismic turnings of conversion vibrate through the whole person because, as Augustine reminded his neophytes, Christ created the whole person, redeemed the whole person, liberated the whole person. Still, any individual catechist tends to focus effort more on one layer than on others. Augustine, too, had his preference. For all his intellectualism, he focused most often on the human heart, for he believed that there is no voice to reach the ears of God save the voice of the heart. Augustine believed that we are, in the end, lovers—lovers who may perhaps spend most of the time loving the wrong things or loving the right ones in the wrong ways. Nonetheless we are lovers, for we are made in the image and likeness of God—and God is love. Thus, for Augustine, to guide people through the new birth of conversion meant evoking rightly ordered loves and quelling wrongly ordered ones. For him this was the standard—indeed, the essence—of the Scriptures: love of God and love of neighbor. And as he pointed out to Deogratias, this twofold love itself flowed from Christ:

> Thus, before all else, Christ came so that people might learn how much God loves them, and might learn this so that they might catch fire with love for him who first loved them, and so they also love their neighbor as he commanded and showed by his example—he who made himself their neighbor by loving them.[12]

[12] *cat. rud.* 4.8 (CCL 46: 128); trans. Canning, 70.

For those of us baffled by the intricacy of Christian initiation, by its many rites and its subtle catechesis, Augustine calls us to a simplicity on the far side of complexity. He reminds us that Christian initiation is ultimately an apprenticeship in the love of God and the love of neighbor. It is, in the end, that simple.

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I. WORKS OF AUGUSTINE: TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

TEXTS

Nearly all of Augustine's works can be found in J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina, vols. 32–47. Migne reproduced the excellent seventeenth-century edition of the Benedictines of St. Maur. This includes almost everything except certain letters (notably the thirty-one discovered by Johannes Divjak in 1980) and several hundred sermons (notably the twenty-six sermons discovered by François Dolbeau in 1990). The Italian publishers of Augustine's works, the Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana (NBA), have provided a valuable service to students of Augustine by posting this classic Maurist edition on the Internet: http://www.augustinus.it /latino/index.htm. The Patrologia Latina (PL) edition is gradually being replaced by modern critical editions in the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL) and the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCL). The excellent, but still incomplete, Bibliothèque Augustinienne (BA) has the Latin text with a French translation on facing pages and includes lengthy introductions and notes.

TRANSLATIONS

For an overview of the writings of Augustine, see William Harmless, ed., *Augustine in His Own Words* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010). The entire Augustinian corpus is gradually being translated into English; see John E. Rotelle and Boniface Ramsey, eds., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (WSA). These translations have been the primary ones used throughout this work. In addition, there are Augustine volumes in the Fathers of the Church (FOTC) series

(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press) and Ancient Christian Writers (ACW) series (New York: Newman Press/Paulist Press). An older translation, done in the nineteenth century, is the large eight-volume collection from the first series of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF) (1886–1888; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); these volumes are also available online at various Internet websites.

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III. STUDIES OF AUGUSTINE

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